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THE WATER-COLOURS OF J. M. W. TURNER

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PREFATORY NOTE.

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A FOREWORD BY SIR CHARLES HOLROYD, R.E.

I AM particularly glad to write a foreword to this collection of reproductions of water-colours by J. M. W. Turner, as they are perhaps the best renderings of the beautiful originals that I have yet seen. The more reproductions we can have of the master's drawings the more will it be possible to study properly his great message, and the more will his genius be recognised. I would like to see everyone of his nineteen thousand water-colour sketches and lead-pencil drawings reproduced, so that we could all hold them in our hands and carry them about with us; for in them there is an unfailing beauty of composition, and a glorious truth of effect and of detail, by which Turner managed to make complete pictures out of even the fewest touches. No one realises Turner's full genius till he studies these drawings, often made in the very presence of nature. They teach us to look at her with a new and seeing eye. Their absolute truth has hardly yet been fully recognised. I have had the fortune to carry reproductions of these drawings with me in Wharfedale and in Venice, and I have compared them touch for touch with nature. Often and often have I been able to see the meaning of what appears a careless scratch or even an accidental wriggle, only when the actual scene was before me. They are mostly drawn from one exact spot, as may be seen by the crossing of the branches of the trees, although these are now so many years older, and the folding of the hills. It was in the seventies that I first made these comparisons in Wharfedale and I still remember my delight at recognising the gnarled markings on three ash trees a little below Bolton Abbey; the angle of their growth forming a rough letter N was identical although they were mere saplings in Turner's drawing, and even the broken bank of the river was still the same, all the winter floods of variable Wharfe not having washed away nature's truth to Turner's drawing. My experiences in Venice are similar. With the reproduction in my hand I could say that Turner drew a particular scene from a particular flagstone on the quay, or *piazza*. The lines of the houses on both sides of the canal cut one another in the exact way they did in Turner's sketches only from one particular spot, but from there the whole scene was complete exactly. Many subjects were sketched from the middle of the canal and owing to the movement of the water it was not easy to compare exactly the reproductions with the scenes in nature. Curiously nearly all these scenes from the canal were taken from the *traghettos*, or ferries, of which there are several up and down the Grand Canal, where gondolas wait for hire, tied to their posts, somewhat as cabs stand in their ranks in our streets. It is possible that Turner in his economy made use of these waiting gondolas by giving the gondolier a palanca for

permission to sit in a gondola whilst it was thus at rest. It was an ideal place for working from in his day, for no "penny steamboats" then splashed up and down the canal making things rock in their wake, but peace reigned in the reflections of the palaces.

Only very few of the drawings of which I had reproductions went unrecognised; one was a view from high up, probably from some room in the monastery of San Giorgio, and others all contained a view of a tall tower, which, from the neighbouring buildings, ought to have been the Campanile of San Marco. But the tower in the drawings had an extra cornice on the slope of the pyramidal top, with supports below, which I could in no wise reconcile with nature and which puzzled me for some time, in fact until I saw the restoration begun on the tower of San Giorgio. Then I found that the extra cornice and supports were a peculiar and ingenious form of scaffolding, used for the placing of new tiles on the steep slope of the pyramidal top—and sure enough when I got back to London and looked at the original drawing with a glass, the touches of water-colour indicated the scaffolding quite plainly, and a wonderful small splash of colour enabled one to realise the angel on the top, wings and all. I found, too, that all drawings, in which the Campanile appeared, done by Turner during that visit, gave the restoration works quite plainly, even when the tower was seen from a long way off. The beauty of the touches in Turner's drawings from nature can only be fully appreciated when the drawing, or a reproduction of it, is compared with the actual subject, for every bend and movement of the supple brush means something. It is not possible to convey the drawings all over Turner's far-stretching wanderings, but, if only we had good reproductions of them all, what a pleasure we should all have, and how much we should learn to appreciate his greatness. I should like to see, as I have said, every fragment before the public. It is practically the only way of using our great legacy fully. The original drawings are perishable things, and must not always be in the light; many have faded already, let us reproduce them while we may. The slighter sketches reproduce best, as may be seen in this book. Such drawings as the *Edinburgh from St. Margaret's Loch*, about 1801 (Plate VI.), for example. Note, too, the splendid sketch of *Barnard Castle*, about 1827 (Plate XVI.); how well it comes, we can almost see the brush-marks draw the forms of the foliage, and the way Turner has used the water; they are perfect in their way. When Turner worked up a drawing it became like a lovely flower with a delicate bloom upon its infinite distances, as in the *Lake of Nemi*, about 1818 (Plate XI.), and the *Crook of the Lune* (Plate XIII.); they are like a gloxinia or an auricula.

This curious beauty of theirs was often obtained, as it appears to me, by alterations in the surface of the paper and by colour left in the grain of the paper after washing out or rubbing down a tone —it alters when the lighting of the drawing is altered, and its changeableness is part of its beauty.

I should like to see reproductions of the sketch books, made page by page and bound in similar bindings to the originals, where these exist. Mr. Finberg has lately put some of these books together again—some drawings having been removed from the books for exhibition—for purposes of the very useful inventory of our Turner drawings that he is so carefully making for the Trustees of the National Gallery. The books are much more interesting when seen together. I remember one which Turner had with him in the Lake District and you could trace his itinerary by turning over the pages. He evidently left Keswick in the morning and drew two or three views of Lodore and the end of the Lake of Derwentwater, the hills getting bigger as he comes nearer to them; familiar views of Castle Cragg and the river come next, and to me some most interesting views of that wide-spreading mountain Glaramara, some of them from unfamiliar points of view; but I was able to recognise them because I have stayed for a month at a time in farmhouses on the lower slopes, and I have explored that beautiful mountain's inmost caves. After this Honister Crag and Buttermere appear in due course. How interesting it would be to have reproductions of such books and follow the track of the master page by page. How we should learn to know him and to see familiar scenes with his eye. We should find that exaggeration was not the character of his landscape drawing, when he was working from nature, but insight into the forms. His effects of extra height can generally be got by sitting low on the ground or even right in a ditch. From his drawings, from those in this book of reproductions, we learn again a forgotten truth. Fine drawing, form, is the essential in our art; great and noble colourist as Turner was, we have had other fine colourists in the British school of water-colour painting, but it is just in his drawing and his sense of the beauty and significance of line that he is supreme. As Titian in Venice excelled the great colourists of his time, such as Bonifazio and Paris Bordone, so by his drawing and sense of form Turner excelled as a draughtsman even more than as a colourist.

CHARLES HOLROYD.

THE WATER-COLOUR DRAWINGS OF J. M. W. TURNER, R.A. BY W. G. RAWLINSON.

WHAT makes Turner's water-colour drawings so profoundly interesting—apart from their extraordinary and enduring attractiveness—is the fact that in them lies before you, plainly visible, the whole course and development of his art. And the continuousness and regularity of that development are remarkable. There are no pauses, no gaps, hardly a table-land ; only one steady, continued progress. No matter how high a point he reached, he was never content to rest there, but was always pressing onward to fresh achievement, trying new effects, challenging new difficulties even down to the last years of his life. To anyone familiar with his work in water-colour, it is generally easy to date his drawings within a year or two.

No doubt the growth of his art can also be traced in his oil pictures, but with some important differences. In them, even up to middle life, he was constantly and strongly influenced by the work of other painters whom he was often consciously or unconsciously rivalling. First Richard Wilson, then Van de Velde and Bakhuysen, afterwards Gaspar Poussin, Claude, Cuyp, Rembrandt, Titian and others, all in turn had their effect on him. As a result of this rivalry, his oil pictures were less spontaneous, less sincere than his water-colours. His lack of education also unfitted him to be the painter of the classical and sacred subjects in which he attempted to compete with the old masters. No doubt there were brilliant exceptions—such, for example, as *Mercury and Herse*, *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus*, and others, but I think Ruskin was justified in calling many of them " nonsense pictures." Moreover, in his oil paintings Turner was constantly experimenting—not always successfully—both with his materials and his methods and, as a consequence, many, especially those of his later years, have greatly suffered with time.

But in his water-colours, after his first years of training and experiment, he was simply and always himself—he was Turner. Paul Sandby, John Cozens, Malton, Hearne, De Loutherbourg, and others of the older water-colour painters, all had their influence on him, but in no case did it last long. The two men who affected him most were Cozens and Girtin, his friend and fellow student, of whom more will be said hereafter. But by 1800, or at the latest 1802, Turner had passed all his contemporaries, and stood alone, the acknowledged head of the English school of water-colour painting, which in the first half of the nineteenth century was to reach its zenith. Before attempting to trace the course of his art

from its simple beginnings to its glorious close, a few brief words may be desirable as to his early life and surroundings.

Born, it is usually supposed (but by no means known with certainty), in 1775, of humble parents—his father was a barber in Maiden Lane, Strand—at a quite early age he developed unusual powers of drawing. The barber proudly exposed his boy's works in his shop window, and occasionally sold them for a shilling or two apiece; he also showed them to his customers, amongst whom was Thomas Stothard, R.A., who praised them and advised him to make an artist of his son. It is impossible accurately to trace his life before 1789, when he was presumably fourteen, but it is clear that he had only some brief intervals of schooling, first at a suburban and then at a sea-side academy—both probably of the cheapest and poorest middle-class type—in fact he never had any education worthy the name. He received lessons in drawing, however, from various teachers, including Malton and probably Paul Sandby, R.A. At about twelve or thirteen years of age, he was placed in the workshop of the great mezzotint engraver, John Raphael Smith, who, like many of his craft, was also a print dealer. Here Turner, along with his future companion Girtin, was chiefly occupied in colouring prints for sale, but he also learnt a great deal about engraving which was to stand him in good stead in after life. After possibly another interval of schooling, he passed, somewhere about his fourteenth year, into the office of Mr. Hardwick, a distinguished architect, who employed him in drawing and tinting "elevations," adding landscape backgrounds to plans, etc. It was here, no doubt, that he laid the foundation of the fine architectural draughtsmanship which is noticeable in his earliest exhibited works and throughout his life. Long before he had mastered trees and foliage he could render accurately the lines and structure of a great building, as well as its intricacies of detail, as, for example, in the *West Front of Peterborough Cathedral*, which he exhibited at the Royal Academy a year or two later. Water, also, seems to have presented comparatively little difficulty to him from the first; owing possibly to early studies at Brentford and Margate, at both of which places he was at school. Very few, however, of his quite boyish drawings—I refer to those before 1790—have survived, and those few are mostly copies of prints or of works of other artists. One, *Folly Bridge and Bacon's Tower, Oxford* (taken from the heading of an Oxford Almanack), may be seen in the National Gallery (No. 613 N.G.); another in my possession, *A Roadside Inn*—the earliest dated work by him (1786) known to me—is possibly original, but more probably copied from a drawing by M. A. Rooker, A.R.A.

From the architect's office, at the instigation it is believed of

Mr. Hardwick himself, Turner in 1789 became a student at the Royal Academy, and may be said to have definitely taken up an artist's career. In the following year, 1790, he sent his first drawing to the Royal Academy Exhibition, then held in Somerset House. This was the *View of the Archbishop's Palace, Lambeth*, reproduced here (Plate I.). For the work of a boy of fifteen, the good architectural drawing, the admirable rendering of reflected light on the houses, the careful treatment of the figures (the costumes are quite correct for 1790), and still more, the effectiveness of the composition are remarkable. There is, however, nothing original in the style, which is simply that of Malton and Sandby.

To the next year's exhibition (1791) he sent two drawings, one of which, *The Interior of King John's Palace, Eltham*, is a striking work, of great originality. Not only has it the sound architectural draughtsmanship before alluded to, but in its strong *chiaroscuro*, its rendering of sunlight breaking through the ruined windows and lighting the gloom, its sense of poetry and mystery, it would be creditable to any artist of mature age.

A curious phase in Turner's work of the next year—1792—merits notice. Influenced probably by the pictures of De Loutherbourg, a French painter, who had settled in England and had been made an R.A., Turner, for a few months entirely changed his scheme of colour, adopting a curious range of greyish and purplish browns as his prevailing tone, in place of the pale greys, blues, and neutral tints, which, in common with the other water-colour painters of the period, he had hitherto employed. In this style are several drawings of Richmond Park, one or two of a fire at the Pantheon, and many of the beautiful scenery on the downs beyond Bristol, where, during his early life, he often stayed with relatives. One, *The Mouth of the Avon*, is reproduced here (Plate II.). In nearly all the Bristol drawings one special feature is noticeable. Turner had evidently been struck by the unusual spectacle of the masts and sails of the tall East-Indiamen, which were daily to be seen in full sail under the thick woods of the Clifton downs, beating their way up the narrow gorge of the Avon to the port of Bristol.

Turner continued to exhibit at the Royal Academy in 1793 and 1794. He sold his drawings readily, and, although I cannot discover any public references to his work before 1796, he must have attracted notice, as in 1793 he received a commission—his first—for drawings for engraving. The "Copper-plate Magazine" (afterwards known as "The Itinerant") was one of many serials then in vogue which were illustrated by the water-colour painters—"draftsmen" they were usually called—and in one of its five volumes he is alluded to as "the ingenious Mr. Turner." He is said to have

been paid two guineas apiece for these drawings, with a very small allowance for travelling expenses, it being stipulated that every subject should be drawn on the spot. With his slender wardrobe and his painting materials on his back, carrying usually also his fishing-rod, he tramped the country; he found his way into Kent, across Wales, through Shropshire and Cheshire, on to Cumberland, and returned by the Midlands. A reproduction of one of the "Copper-plate Magazine" drawings—*Peterborough Cathedral from the North*—will be found here (Plate III.). Although on a small scale, it is typical of his work of this period, and it shows the strong influence on him of his contemporaries, Rooker, Hearne, and Dayes; yet there is always a decided individuality of his own. As the late Mr. Cosmo Monkhouse* has well remarked of these early drawings:—

> "The great fact in comparing Turner and the other water-colour painters of his own time is this, that while each of the best of the others is remarkable for one or two special beauties of style or effect, he is remarkable for all. He could reach near, if not quite, to the golden simplicity of Girtin, to the silver sweetness of Cozens; he could draw trees with the delicate dexterity of Edridge, and equal the beautiful distances of Glover . . . . He was not only technically the equal, if not the master of them all, but he comprehended them, almost without exception."

About this time (1793), Turner had the good fortune to attract the notice of Dr. Monro, the leading Physician of Bethlehem Hospital, who had a house in the Adelphi, and another at Bushey. He was a well-known lover and patron of water-colour art, and was in the habit of inviting promising young students, including Turner, Girtin, Varley, and other afterwards well-known artists, to his house, where they were given drawings by Rembrandt, Canaletto, Gainsborough, and other deceased masters, to study and copy; especially also some recent sketches by John Cozens, one of the most poetical of English painters, who had just returned from Italy and Switzerland, where he had accompanied the millionaire Beckford. The influence of Cozens on Turner was marked and immediate, and the latter must have made a very large number of transcripts of the elder painter's works; in fact, all the very numerous early drawings of Italian and Swiss subjects by Turner in Indian ink and blue, which are so frequently to be met with, are copies from Cozens, as Turner did not visit the Continent until

* "Biographies of the Great Artists—J. M. W. Turner, R.A.," Sampson Low, 1897, p. 27. Of the many biographies of Turner, this, although slight, gives probably the best and truest view of him and his work.

1802; yet, as I have before remarked, all show a certain transformation in passing through his hands. Dr. Monro gave the lads half-a-crown a night and their supper, and kept their drawings. The training was an admirable one for them, and when the doctor's collection was dispersed at his death, it did not prove a bad investment so far as he was concerned. Mr. Henderson, another collector and amateur artist, afforded Turner and his companions similar opportunities of studying and copying the works of older painters.

From 1793 to 1796 Turner's advance in power was steady. His subjects were varied—English and Welsh cathedrals, old castles, ruined abbeys, village churches, country towns, waterfalls and trout streams—the latter generally with a bridge and always with an angler. He was himself a keen fisherman, and his anglers' attitudes are always carefully drawn and at once recognisable. Occasionally some striking atmospheric effect, seen probably on the spot, is introduced. Sometimes the picture is strikingly enhanced by the play of sunlight, occasionally by boldly treated *chiaroscuro*. The architecture is invariably drawn with accuracy and taste, both as regards perspective and detail. His colouring was a dainty harmony of broken tints in pale blues, greens, browns, and neutral greys. Many good drawings of this time are in private collections, and the Print Room of the British Museum contains some fine examples which have been preserved from light, and are consequently in perfect, unfaded condition—notably *Lincoln and Worcester Cathedrals*, and *Tintern Abbey*. Most of the English cathedrals were drawn by him between 1793 and 1796, including, in addition to the two just named, Canterbury, Ely, Peterborough, Rochester, Salisbury, and York; as well as Bath, Kirkstall, Malmesbury, Malvern, Tintern, Ewenny, Llanthony, Waltham and many other abbeys, together with castles innumerable—all in the delicate, "tinted manner." He also made a large number of studies of boats and shipping at Dover, one of which is reproduced here (Plate IV.). It was probably there and at Margate that he laid the foundation of the extraordinarily accurate knowledge of everything connected with the sea and shipping which distinguished him all his life.

His works of this early period are usually signed. The earliest signature known to me is the one alluded to on page 5, "W. Turner, 1786." For the next few years he signed either simply "Turner," or oftener "W. Turner," occasionally adding the date. In 1799, when he was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy, he changed to "W. Turner, A.R.A.," and in 1802, on receiving the honour of full membership, he became "J. M. W. Turner, R.A." A few years later he was appointed Professor of

Perspective to the Royal Academy, and much to the amusement of his fellow academicians he now sometimes added "P.P." In the works of his later life, it is the exception to find any signature.

In Turner's drawings of this period, as in those of the early English water-colour school generally, one is struck by a freshness, a simplicity, a new outlook on nature, which contrast with the works of the classical painters who since the death of Rubens and the great Dutch landscapists—Van Goyen, Cuyp, Hobbema, Van der Capelle, De Koninck, and others—had for a century or more dominated European art. Landscape had come to be regarded more as a fitting background to classical story, and although often stately, was always more or less conventional. Now, Nature was beginning to be studied and painted for her own sake. Yet Turner, like Byron, throughout his life recognised that natural scenery *alone* never makes a completely satisfying picture—always there must be some touch of the human element, some suggestion of human presence, human handiwork. This, however, is entirely a different point of view from that of the classical painters.

From the delicate tints which, up to 1795-6, had characterized the work of Turner, in common with that of his contemporaries of the English water-colour school, he passed, almost suddenly, in 1797, to a larger and stronger style and a bolder range of colour, although the latter was still limited as compared with the fuller tones of his middle and later years. At first, in 1796, the pale blues and greens were simply deepened and strongly accented, as was seen in the superb drawings of *Snowdon* and *Cader Idris* which were shown last year (1908) at the Franco-British Exhibition, and to some extent in the *Distant View of Exeter*, in the Tatham Sale of the same year. Soon, however, these tones were combined and contrasted with deep, rich, golden browns. In 1797, 1798, and 1799, Turner sent to the Royal Academy Exhibitions a series of magnificent drawings of large size, all showing a striking advance in range and power. Eight views of *Salisbury Cathedral* painted for Sir R. Colt Hoare (two are in the Victoria and Albert Museum), the fine *Crypt of Kirkstall Abbey* (Sloane Museum), the still finer *Warkworth* (Victoria and Albert Museum) and the famous *Norham Castle* (the late Mr. Laundy Walters), with several others, mark a new departure in his art. Turner always said that he owed his success in life to the *Norham Castle*. Thirty years later, when he was illustrating Scott's works, and was the guest of Sir Walter at Abbotsford, walking up Tweedside one day in the company of Cadell the publisher, as they passed Norham Turner took off his hat. On Cadell asking the reason, he replied, "That picture made me." Probably he considered that

it was to its influence that he owed his election as an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1799, the year of its exhibition.

Some recent writers have contended that this great expansion of Turner's art was due to the influence of his friend and companion Thomas Girtin, but they have adduced no evidence to support that theory. Girtin, it is needless to say, was a very great painter, and his early death in 1802 was a severe loss to English art. And no doubt he and Turner, in their constant intimacy, must have continually and considerably affected each other—indeed up to 1795 it is often exceedingly difficult to distinguish between the two men's work. But, so far as I have been able to study Girtin's early drawings, I cannot discover in those executed before 1797—the year which witnessed Turner's new departure—any of the breadth and boldness which marked both men from 1797 onwards. Certainly no work of Girtin's of 1796—the year previous—approaches in force Turner's *Snowdon* and *Cader Idris*, which already in design if not in colour herald his all-round expansion of 1797.

Nor does the current opinion of that day appear to support the view just alluded to—quite the contrary. The "St. James's Chronicle" of 1797, after praising Turner's *Transept of Ewenny Priory* and *Choir of Salisbury Cathedral* in the Royal Academy Exhibition of that year, goes on to remark that, "Mr. Girtin's drawings in general *appear to be formed in the style of Turner.*" Again, "The Sun" of 1799 devotes a long paragraph to the eulogy of Turner's *Carnarvon Castle*, concluding with the remark, "This is a drawing that Claude might be proud to own"; it then praises Girtin's *Bethgellert*, but prefaces its notice with the observation "We do not remember to have seen the name of the artist before the present year. *The drawing is something after the style of the preceding artist*" [Turner]. Redgrave also effectually disposes of the question in "A Century of Painters," 1866, Vol. II., page 402.

Moreover, Turner's great drawings of 1797, 1798 and 1799 have characteristics which are not at all those of Girtin. Already there is visible something of that wonderful delicacy, that sense of mystery, of 'infinity,' that indefinable charm which we call 'poetry,' which distinguishes his work—and especially his work in water-colour—from that of every other landscape painter—work all the more remarkable in that it proceeded from a man born in a back lane off the Strand, without any education worthy of the name, and throughout his life unable to speak or write grammatically—yet withal a man of strong intellect, keenly ambitious, a reader, and a voluminous writer of poetry.

One drawing only of this period is reproduced here—*Distant View of Lichfield Cathedral* (Plate V.). It suffers from the unavoid-

able reduction in size, but it is characteristic of Turner's altered style. Unfortunately it has at some time been varnished, probably by the painter himself, as have two others equally important, of the same period—*The Refectory of Fountains Abbey* and a replica of the *Cader Idris*—both of which are now in America. Gainsborough treated several of his drawings similarly, as did Girtin, Varley, Barrett and others of the early English school, their object being avowedly to rival in water-colour the depth and richness of oil painting. But not unfrequently, as here in the *Lichfield*, the varnish in time disintegrates the colouring matter and produces a curious *granulatea* look, not unlike aquatint. Indeed, the fine *Fountains Abbey* just alluded to was sold not many years ago at a well-known London auction room, as a coloured aquatint, and fetched only £5.

After Turner's election in 1799 as an Associate of the Royal Academy, he exhibited fewer water-colours and more oil pictures, although he was continually producing drawings, mostly of large size and on commission. For the next few years his style did not greatly alter, although a steady growth in power and range is visible. Several large views of *Edinburgh* and its neighbourhood, a series of *Fonthill* commissioned by Beckford, another of *Chepstow* executed for the Earl of Harewood, together with the Welsh castles of *Conway*, *Carnarvon*, *St. Donat's* and *Pembroke*, are among the most important. The *Stonehenge* reproduced here (Plate VII.) is probably the work of about 1803–1804.

He made also during this period a few drawings for engraving, but, with the exception of the well-known *Oxford Almanacks*, these were chiefly on a small scale and gave him but little scope; nor was he fortunate in his engravers until in James Basire, the engraver to the University, he met with an artist of higher standing. The University commissioned from Turner ten large drawings for the headings of the *Oxford Almanacks*, all of which he executed between 1798 and 1804. They are preserved in the University Galleries, and are noticeable alike for their architectural draughtsmanship, their admirable composition, and their general breadth of treatment.

About this time, and also in connection with a commission for engraving, he was first attracted to that Yorkshire scenery which was afterwards to have such an important influence on his career. Dr. Whitaker, the Vicar of Whalley, on the borders of Lancashire and Yorkshire, a wealthy and learned antiquary, required some illustrations for his forthcoming "History of the Parish of Whalley," and Turner was recommended to him, it is said by a Harrogate bookseller, as a young artist of fast-rising reputation. It was during this visit that he made the acquaintance of Mr. Walter Fawkes, the squire of Farnley, near Leeds, at whose

hospitable mansion, Farnley Hall, he was shortly to become a frequent and an honoured guest.

It is time that reference should be made to the *sketches*, which form such an important part of the volume of Turner's work in water-colour. From the outset of his career, on every journey, he made copious studies—at first mainly in pencil, but sometimes in water-colour and occasionally in crayon or oil—of every paintable spot he visited, keeping usually a separate pocket-book for each tour. The sketches were sometimes rapid, sometimes elaborate. Especially he made notes in colour of skies, clouds, water, and any striking atmospheric effects which he might chance to see. These although often slight, and usually swiftly executed, were nevertheless singularly accurate. In a pocket-book of 1798 I find twenty-five such, with a list describing each :—*Twilight*, *Clear*, *Rain Coming*, *Sunny*, *Crimsoned*, *Showery*, *Gathering after Fog*, and so on. These sketches and studies he continued to make and to store throughout his life, even up to his last journey on the Continent in 1845. By the decision of the Court of Chancery, at the end of a long litigation over his will, they were awarded—nineteen thousand in all—to be the property of the nation, and after many years delay they are now being admirably arranged and catalogued at the National Gallery by Mr. Finberg, who writes on them here. It is needless to say that to the student of Turner's life work they are of the utmost interest and importance, and often—especially the later ones—of surpassing beauty. The examples which have recently (1908) been placed on view in the National Gallery are mostly of Turner's earlier periods, but one or two belong to quite the close of his life ; some are drawings nearly finished but discarded.

In 1802 Turner visited the Continent for the first time. He was naturally impressed with Calais, his first French town, and on his return he painted the well-known picture of *Calais Pier* (National Gallery), and the still magnificent but now much darkened *Vintage at Mâcon* (the Earl of Yarborough). But it was in Switzerland, Savoy and Piedmont that he spent most of his time, and the results may be seen in the fine drawings of Bonneville, Chamounix, and the Lake of Geneva in various collections, the *Falls of the Reichenbach*, the *Glacier and Source of the Arveron*, and others at Farnley, and the superb large body-colour sketches of *The Devil's Bridge* and the *St. Gothard Pass*, in the portfolios of the National Gallery. Three of his Swiss drawings he sent to the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1803.

From 1803 to 1812 he was continually receiving commissions, both for oil pictures and water-colours, from influential patrons,

including the Earls of Egremont, Essex, Lonsdale, and Yarborough, Sir John Leicester, Sir John Soane, and other wealthy amateurs. In 1807 he started his well-known *Liber Studiorum* in rivalry of the *Liber Veritatis* of Claude Lorraine, which had recently been successfully reproduced in engraving by English publishers. For this he made about a hundred drawings in sepia—a colour he rarely used elsewhere—as guides for the professional engravers whom he employed on the work. Nearly all these drawings, which are mostly slight, are now in the National Gallery.

During the ten years between 1803 and 1812, Turner's style in water-colour underwent a gradual, but a very considerable change. He left the dark blues and deep golden browns which, as we have seen, marked his first departure in 1797 from the "tinted manner" of his early days, and he gradually adopted a lighter and more natural range of colour. This new style is best seen in the work of what is known as his "Yorkshire period," which began about 1809, and continued, with various developments, up to about 1820. His subjects were at first mainly taken from the neighbourhood of the stately house in the beautiful valley of the Wharfe which has become a place of pilgrimage to Turner students from all parts of the world—I refer, of course, to Farnley Hall. Its then owner, Mr. Walter Fawkes, was up to his death a kind friend and liberal patron of the painter, who was a frequent visitor at the house, and retained the friendship of the family down to his latest years. Farnley Hall is still filled with drawings by Turner of its surroundings, the neighbouring Wharfedale, important Swiss and other foreign landscapes, illustrations to Scott's and Byron's Poems, studies of birds, fish, etc. It also contains some important oil pictures by him. To one series of water-colours—the "Rhine Sketches"—I shall have occasion to refer later.

Ruskin admirably describes the characteristics of these 'Yorkshire drawings' ("Modern Painters," Vol. I., pp. 124, 125) :—

> "Of all his [Turner's] drawings, I think those of the Yorkshire series have the most heart in them, the most affectionate, simple, unwearied serious finishings of truth. There is in them little seeking after effect, but a strong love of place; little exhibition of the artist's own powers or peculiarities, but intense appreciation of the smallest local minutiæ. These drawings have, unfortunately, changed hands frequently, and have been abused and ill-treated by picture-dealers and cleaners; the greater number are now mere wrecks. I name them not as instances, but proofs of the artist's study in this district; for the affection to which they owe their origin must have been grounded long years before. . . . . .

"It is, I believe, to these broad, wooded steeps and swells of the Yorkshire downs that we, in part, owe the singular massiveness that prevails in Turner's mountain drawing, and gives it one of its chief elements of grandeur. . . I am in the habit of looking to the Yorkshire drawings as indicating one of the culminating points of Turner's career. In these he attained the highest degree of what he had up to that time attempted, namely, finish and quantity of form, united with expression of atmosphere, and light without colour. His early drawings are singularly instructive in this definiteness and simplicity of aim." . . . . . "Turner evidently felt that the claims upon his regard possessed by those places which first had opened to him the joy and the labour of his life could never be superseded. No alpine cloud could efface, no Italian sunshine outshine the memories of the pleasant days of Rokeby and Bolton; and many a simple promontory dim with southern olive, many a lone cliff that stooped unnoticed over some alien wave, was recorded by him with a love and delicate care that were the shadows of old thoughts and long-lost delights, whose charm yet hung like morning mist above the chanting waves of Wharfe and Greta."

From 1809 to 1820, Turner's powers were rapidly developing, and he was producing many important oil pictures, some of which —*The Frosty Morning*, *Crossing the Brook*, *Somer Hill*, *Walton Bridges* and *Raby Castle*—were, perhaps, among the finest of his whole life. He was also busy with drawings for engraving—chiefly for book illustrations, and probably for this reason he seems to have executed comparatively few water-colours for commissions or for sale. One, however, the magnificent *Chryses* (Mrs. T. Ashton), which he sent to the Royal Academy in 1811, calls for notice. It is a large, impressive work, closely resembling in design the *Glaucus and Scylla* of the *Liber Studiorum*, but on a broader and nobler scale; the colour-scheme intermediate between that of his early and his middle time. What is so remarkable is its extraordinary *Greek* feeling. Colour apart, it at once recalls the scenery and the sentiment of the Greek Islands, although Turner never in his life saw them. Many will remember the effect which the drawing produced in the Winter Exhibition of 1887 at Burlington House. Mr. Morland Agnew's beautiful *Scarborough*, reproduced here (Plate VIII.), also belongs to this period.

One of Turner's earliest series of book illustrations was his "Southern Coast of England," which he begun about 1812 and continued to 1826. He agreed with W. B. Cooke, a fine line-

engraver and an enterprising publisher, to supply forty drawings of views along the coast, from the Nore on the east to the Bristol Channel on the west; many other leading water-colour artists of the day—De Wint, Clennell, Prout, and others—being also contributors. Turner was to receive seven and a half guineas apiece for the drawings, which were of small size; but although this price was soon raised to ten, and later to twelve guineas, he became dissatisfied, and broke with Cooke, who, however, judging from the correspondence, appears to have treated him fairly. He had, moreover, given him many other commissions for drawings and had held exhibitions of these, and the engravings from them, at his rooms in Soho Square.

The Southern Coast drawings are elaborate, highly finished, and in a rather warmer tone of colour than hitherto. Many are extremely beautiful, but in some there is visible that crowding of lights and foreground figures, which from this time onwards is not unfrequent in Turner's work. The majority of the drawings are now, alas, so faded as to give but little idea of their pristine beauty. What they all were like originally, may still be seen in the beautiful *Clovelly Bay* in the National Gallery of Ireland (Vaughan Bequest), and in the *Lulworth Cove* reproduced here (Plate IX.).

About the same time, Turner made a fine series of drawings, all on a large scale, of the beautiful country which lies inland among the hills, between Hastings and Tunbridge Wells. These were commissions from a well-known and eccentric M.P., "Jack Fuller," whose country-seat "Rose Hall" (now known as "Brightling Park") lies in the heart of that neighbourhood. Four were effectively engraved as coloured aquatints, but were never published; the rest were reproduced as Line Engravings in the "Views of Hastings and its Vicinity" (afterwards called "Views in Sussex"), published a few years later. The series remained for a long time unbroken, but it was dispersed at Christie's last year (1908). All the "Sussex" drawings were of the highest quality, sober in colour and treatment, as befitted the character of the scenery, but the majority have been badly faded by long years of exposure to sunlight.

Somewhat similar in character to the "Southern Coast" drawings, but a little later and even more highly finished, is a series which Turner made in 1818–1819 from *camera obscura* sketches by Hakewill, an architect, to illustrate the latter's "Picturesque Tour in Italy," published in 1820. Ruskin, who possessed many of these, ranked them very highly and frequently alludes to them in "Modern Painters" and elsewhere. In the "Notes on his Drawings by J. M. W. Turner, R.A., 1878," his last important work on art,

he describes them (p. 22) as "a series which expresses the mind of Turner in its consummate power, but not yet in its widest range. Ordering to himself still the same limits in method and aim, he reaches under these conditions the summit of excellence, and of all these drawings there is but one criticism possible—they 'cannot be better done'." By the kindness of Mr. Morland Agnew, two of the "Hakewill" series, *The Lake of Nemi* (Plate XI.) and *Turin from the Superga* (Plate XII.), are reproduced here.

In 1817 or 1818 Turner began the drawings which were to illustrate one of his most famous works, the sumptuous "History of Richmondshire," which still admittedly remains the finest topographical book ever published. The subjects—which were chosen for Turner by a local committee of gentlemen—were all taken from that romantic district in the North Riding of Yorkshire, on the borders of Lancashire and Westmorland, of which the town of Richmond is the centre. The work was to be the *magnum opus* of Dr. Whitaker whose earlier Histories of Whalley and Craven had also been illustrated by Turner, and his publishers, Messrs. Longman, spared neither pains nor expense in its production. Turner was paid twenty-five guineas each—then his usual price—for the drawings, which are now worth from one to three thousand guineas apiece. Although simple in style and in colouring as compared with the work of his later years, they have pre-eminently the charm of the 'Yorkshire period' already alluded to. The finest of the series, *The Crook of the Lune*, is, by the courtesy of its owner, the Rev. W. MacGregor, reproduced here (Plate XIII.). The necessary reduction in size makes it difficult fully to appreciate the great beauty of this drawing, which I regard as one of the most consummate works of Turner. Although it must have been, one would imagine, a most intricate and difficult subject for a painter, and notwithstanding that he has treated it with extraordinary minuteness of detail—you can find at least twenty different walks in it—yet all this wealth of exquisite detail is perfectly subordinated to the unity and harmony of the composition as a whole. The other "Richmondshire" drawings are scattered in various collections; many, alas, are sadly faded from constant exposure to light, notably the *Hornby Castle*, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which has become a complete wreck.

May I be permitted here to draw attention to the fact—apparently little known, but none the less true—that, with the exception of some of the darker early works, *no Turner drawing can be continuously exposed unprotected to light, without its ruin being eventually only a question of time.* The more delicate—the more "Turneresque" it is—the quicker will that ruin be accomplished. Usually the fading is so gradual that

it is unnoticed by the owner, but it is certain, and, it need not be added, the depreciation in value is equally certain. I would refer anyone who thinks this an over-statement to the Blue Book on the subject, published in 1888 (Report of the Science and Art Department on the Action of Light on Water-Colours. H.M. Stationery Office, 1888). Several striking object lessons of the effect of exposure may also be seen at the National Gallery in Turner drawings which have been returned after exhibition in provincial Galleries.

Up to about 1830, Turner's finished drawings were mainly in transparent water-colour, but from a quite early period he employed body-colour in his sketches, especially whenever speed was necessary. "Body-colour," it need hardly be said, is ordinary paint mixed with Chinese white or some other opaque white substance in place of water, and is frequently used on a grey or neutral coloured paper, by which means the work is much more rapid. He had recourse to that method on one memorable occasion. In 1817 he went for a three weeks' tour in the Rhine district, and during that time produced no less than fifty drawings of fair size, *i.e.*, at the rate of about three a day. He first stained the paper a uniform bluish-grey, which, although itself sombre in tone, effectively shows up the body-colour work, and must have effected an immense economy of time as compared with ordinary transparent colour. When he returned to England he took the drawings in a roll straight to Farnley Hall, and Mr. Fawkes, to his delight, bought them at once for £500. For a long time they remained in a portfolio unbroken, one of the treasures of the house, but a few years ago some were dispersed at Christie's. One of these, *Goarhausen and Katz Castle*, is reproduced here (Plate X.).

In 1818 Turner went North to make drawings for "The Provincial Antiquities of Scotland," an important illustrated work in which Sir Walter Scott, then in the height of his Waverley fame, was keenly interested, and for which he was gratuitously writing the letterpress. Sir Walter wished the illustrations to be given to a fellow Scotsman, the Rev. John Thomson, of Duddingston, an able landscape painter, but the publishers insisted that Turner's was the name in vogue with the public, and the work was accordingly divided. The drawings, which are all highly finished and of fine quality, are entirely of Lowland scenery, including *Bothwell*, *Crichton*, and *Roslyn* castles, three or four Edinburgh subjects—one, *Edinburgh from the Calton Hill*, very striking—and the seaside fortresses of *Tantallon* and *Dunbar*. They were afterwards presented by the publishers to Sir Walter in recognition of his services in ensuring the success of the book, and they remained at Abbotsford until quite recent years.

In 1819 Turner paid his first visit to Rome, and remained there

some time, going a good deal into English society at the Embassy and elsewhere. He painted a few oil pictures, but not many water-colours; among the most interesting is a fine series of studies in the Campagna, most of which are in the National Gallery. (The "Hakewill" drawings of Rome were probably all finished before he left England.)

His visit to Rome would appear on the whole to have unfavourably affected his art. His oil paintings especially, from this time began to be more and more fantastic in subject, florid in colour, and complicated in design. No doubt there are brilliant exceptions, such as *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, and others, but the old simplicity and sobriety had gone. In the water-colours also the tendency to "foxiness" and florid colour is noticeable, although not so pronounced; it is visible in the Campagna sketches just alluded to. The change was soon recognised by his admirers. In 1820 (the year following), I find in the "Annals of the Fine Arts" the following discriminating criticism of an exhibition of his works which was held that year at the town house of Mr. Fawkes of Farnley :—

> "Turner appears here in his original splendour and to his greatest advantage. Those who only know the artist of late and from his academical works will hardly believe the grandeur, simplicity and beauty that pervade his best works in this collection. . . . The earlier works of Turner before he visited Rome and those he has done since for this collection are like works of a different artist. The former, natural, simple and effective; the latter, artificial, glaring and affected."

From 1820 until about 1840, apart from his sketches, Turner's work in water-colour was almost entirely for engraving. This entailed a great demand on his time, as he invariably also supervised the execution of each engraving. Proof after proof had to be submitted to him, to be returned by him again and again, touched, scraped, and drawn upon for correction, before he would pass it. As he had an intimate knowledge of the engravers' technical processes and always took pains to explain to them his *reasons* for the alterations which he required, he gradually educated them to understand his aims and methods, and so stimulated their ambition, that the best of their plates mark probably the highest point which landscape engraving in line has ever touched. I refer especially to those of "The Southern Coast," Rogers's "Poems" and "Italy," "Byron's Works," "Scott's Poetical and Prose Works," and "Picturesque Views in England and Wales."

In 1824 we find Turner at work on the well-known "Rivers of England," the drawings for which, along with its companion series

"The Ports of England," have for so many years—too many, alas, for their welfare—been exposed for long periods and daily copied at the National Gallery. These show a richer and more elaborate colour-scheme, as compared with the simpler work of the "Yorkshire" period. An example, the *Norham Castle* (No. XIV.), is given here. Both series were well reproduced in mezzotint on steel, which metal had just begun to supersede copper for engraving.

In 1826 he commenced what was to have been his *magnum opus* in line engraving—his "Picturesque Views in England and Wales." In this ill-fated work, which was from first to last commercially a failure, he proposed to depict every feature of English and Welsh scenery — cathedral cities, country towns, ancient castles, ruined abbeys, rivers, mountains, moors, lakes and sea-coast; every hour of day—dawn, midday, sunset, twilight, moonlight; every kind of weather and atmosphere. The hundred or more drawings which he made for the work are mostly elaborately finished and of high character. Some are perhaps over-elaborated; in some the figures are carelessly and at times disagreeably drawn; but for imaginative, poetical treatment, masterly composition, and exquisite colour, the best are unsurpassed. I have ventured to say elsewhere, that in my opinion there are at least a dozen drawings in the "England and Wales" series any one of which would alone have been sufficient to have placed its author in the highest rank of landscape art. Two of the series are represented here — Mr. Schwann's beautiful *Launceston* (Plate XV.) is the earlier (1827); the striking and very attractive *Cowes* (Plate XVIII.), belonging to Mr. Yates, is a few years later. Turner was paid at the rate of sixty to seventy guineas apiece—to-day they are worth from one thousand to two thousand five hundred guineas each.

A new phase in his water-colour art of 1830–1836 calls for notice, viz., his numerous small drawings for *vignette* illustrations, the first and the most important of which were for the far-famed plates of Rogers's "Poems" and "Italy." The drawings for these are markedly different from any of his previous work, and many of them strike what I cannot but regard as an unpleasant note. Marvels of execution, delicate, highly imaginative, and poetical in feeling as they are, they are often strangely forced and extravagant in *colour*. And this applies to nearly all his drawings for *vignettes*. Probably his reason for thus falsifying his colour was connected with the form of engraving, as at the same time he was producing some of his finest and sanest work for the "England and Wales," "Turner's Annual Tours" (now better known as the "Rivers of France") and other engravings of ordinary (not vignette) shape. Whatever may have been his motive, it appears to

me that owing to this unnatural colouring, the exquisitely engraved vignettes themselves are in many cases finer than the drawings for them.

Many, however, of the small drawings of this time are superb, including several of those on grey paper. In the "Rivers of France" series, *Jumièges*, *Caudebec*, *Saint Denis*, *Rouen from St. Catherine's Hill*, and *The Light Towers of the Hêve* (all in the National Gallery), are masterpieces, as are also many of the illustrations to "Scott's Poetical and Prose Works." In Turner's later years he frequently did not sell his drawings for engravings, but lent them to the publishers, charging usually five to seven guineas apiece. He kept many in his possession up to his death, as he did nearly the whole of his sketches. One day he brought the sixty drawings for the "Rivers of France" to Ruskin, rolled in dirty brown paper, offering them to him for twenty-five guineas apiece. To Ruskin's grief he could not induce his father to spend the money. In later years he tells us he had to pay £1,000 for the seventeen which he gave to Oxford!

A long succession of books were illustrated by Turner between 1830 and 1836, containing in all nearly three hundred and fifty plates, mostly of small size. When it is remembered that he also closely supervised the smallest details in the engraving of each one, and that at the same time he was engaged on a number of oil pictures of the highest importance many of which were finished and exhibited, and others left in various stages of completion (including most of those recently added to the Tate Gallery), it may be doubted if such a volume of work was ever before produced in six years by any painter. With 1838, however, his work for the engravers practically came to an end. He was now a rich man and able to refuse tempting offers for the pictures which he had determined to leave to the nation; as for example his *Old Téméraire*, which a wealthy Midland manufacturer is said to have offered to cover with sovereigns.

From 1838 to 1845, when his health began to fail, he spent an increasing time each year on the Continent, and it was during this period that his water-colour art passed into what many regard as its highest, as it was its latest phase. I refer especially to the magnificent *Sketches* of this time, the large majority of which are in the National Gallery. He revisited Venice, which had cast her enchantment on him in earlier years, and he returned again and again to the Lake of Lucerne, which, after Yorkshire, was probably, up to the last, of all places in the world the dearest to his heart. It would be difficult to say how many times he drew the town, the lake, the mountains, and especially the Righi. There are the *Red Righi*, the *Blue Righi*, the *Dark Righi*, the *Pale Righi*, and a hundred other versions—each different, each a 'vision of delight.' He made

drawings also in many neighbouring parts of Switzerland, Piedmont, and Savoy.

The sketches and drawings of this period have all the old delicacy, combined with a greater breadth of treatment, and an amazing wealth and range of colour. Sixty years' experience had given Turner's hand—which up to the very last retained its extraordinary delicacy and certainty—a marvellous cunning. In many cases the drawings were swiftly painted, in others carefully stippled in details; usually with a dry brush worked over body-colour. Sir Hickman Bacon's beautiful *Swiss Lake* (Plate XXII.), *Lausanne* (Plate XXV.), *The Seelisberg, Moonlight* (Plate XXVIII.), Mr. Ralph Brocklebank's highly finished *Schaffhausen* (Plate XXIX.), and *Tell's Chapel, Fluelen* (Plate XXX.)—which Ruskin believed to be Turner's last sketch on the Continent—along with most of the reproductions from the National Gallery, are examples of this time.

This last phase of Turner's art was, however, at the time neither understood nor appreciated, probably owing largely to the new development which had recently taken place in his oil pictures. In these he had set himself, in his old age, the last and hardest tasks of his life—the painting of pure light, of swift movement, of the tumultuous, elemental forces of Nature. Some of the *Venice* subjects, the marvellous *Snow Storm at Sea*, and the *Rain, Steam and Speed*, were entirely misunderstood and ridiculed. "Blackwood's Magazine" led the attack, and "Punch" and Thackeray added their satire. No doubt several of his late oil pictures were far-fetched in subject, fantastic in treatment, and eccentric in colour. Probably, also, no one knew better than he that he had not reached the goal of his ambition; but he also knew that his critics understood his aims as little as they did the difficulties which he had to encounter in striving to reach them, and the old man felt the attacks keenly. Ruskin tells us that he came one evening to his father's house in Denmark Hill, after an especially bitter onslaught on the *Snow Storm at Sea—Vessel in Distress off Harwich*, of 1842, which the critics had described as "soapsuds and whitewash." Ruskin heard him, sitting in his chair by the fire, muttering to himself at intervals "Soapsuds and whitewash," again and again and again. "At last," he says, "I went to him asking 'Why he minded what they said?' Then he burst out 'Soapsuds and whitewash! What would they have? I wonder what they think the sea's like. I wish they'd been in it.'" As a matter of fact, Turner had actually been on board the boat at the time lashed to the mast, at the risk of his life.

Nor has the work of his later years always been understood in our days. Not many years ago a distinguished German oculist

read a paper at the Royal Institution which was afterwards published in which he endeavoured to prove that what he considered eccentricities of colour in Turner's later oil pictures were due—not to his attempts to paint the unpaintable—but to a senile affection of his eyes, which caused an unnatural distortion of his vision to yellow in everything. But Professor Liebreich can hardly have been aware that although the oil pictures upon which he rested his theory, being mainly attempts to depict objects or scenery seen in full sunlight, necessarily tended towards yellow as their prevailing colour, yet at the very same time, and up to his death, Turner was daily producing the sanest, most delicate, most refined water-colour drawings in the palest as well as the deepest tones of every colour on his palette! All the Swiss, Venetian and other sketches of 1838 to 1845, which are the crowning glory of the Water-Colour Rooms in Trafalgar Square, were executed during the period when, according to Professor Liebreich, Turner's sight was permanently and hopelessly affected! No doubt he recognised that water-colour was unsuited as a medium for his new aim at painting pure light, and confined himself accordingly, for such subjects, to oil painting.

The attacks of the critics, however, had had their effect on the public, and Turner in his later years began to find difficulty in selling even his drawings. Ruskin, in his "Notes on his Drawings Exhibited at the Fine Arts Society, 1878," tells with inimitable charm and pathos how the old painter, returning in the winter of 1842 from a tour in Switzerland, brought back with him a series of important sketches, fourteen of which he placed, as was his custom, in the hands of Griffiths, his agent, with a view to the latter's obtaining commissions for *finished* drawings of each. Although the price asked for a large finished drawing was only eighty guineas, and notwithstanding the great beauty of the sketches, nine commissions only could be obtained. Ruskin, his father, Munro of Novar, and Bicknell of Herne Hill, all chose one or more, but other former patrons saw in them what they regarded as a new style, and declined them. Thirty years after, Ruskin—with pride for Turner's sake, he tells us—sold his *Lucerne Town* for a thousand guineas; it has since changed hands at two thousand. The *Lake of Constance*, which at the time no one would buy, was given to Griffiths in lieu of his commission; it fetched two thousand three hundred guineas at Christie's in 1907! After 1845 Turner's health gradually failed; he continued to work at his oil paintings up to his death in 1851, but, so far as is known, he executed comparatively few water-colour sketches or drawings during his last years.

Little has hitherto been said as to Turner's *technique* in water-colour although the subject is one of great interest, but, unfortunately,

my point of view is solely that of a student, and *technique* can only be adequately dealt with by an artist. Much valuable information, however, on the question will be found in Redgrave's "Century of Painters," Vol. I., and in Roget's "History of the Old Water-Colour Society." From the first he was a great innovator, choosing his materials and often inventing his methods without regard to custom, precedent, or anything but the attainment of the precise effect which he desired at the time. Signs of scraping, spongeing, the use of blotting-paper, etc., are constantly to be seen in his drawings. In some, including one in my own possession, the marks of his thumb are distinctly visible in places. But the result always justified the means employed! With his oil pictures, especially those painted after 1830, his experiments, as we know, were often disastrous in their ultimate effects, but it is extremely rare to find any of his water-colours which have suffered in the smallest degree when they have been properly kept. But alas, as has already been pointed out, only too many, and amongst those some of the finest, have been, and still are being, irretrievably damaged and changed by continual exposure to light, both in Public Galleries and on the walls of their owners.

In the foregoing pages I have endeavoured to avoid adding to the already sufficient volume of 'æsthetic criticism' of Turner's art, and I shall confine myself now to the briefest summary of what seem to me the distinctive features of his work in water-colour.

What first strikes one in his drawings, apart from their technical skill, is their *individuality;* they always stand out amongst the work of other artists, however great. The chief cause of this is hard to define, but I should say that it is that they almost invariably possess a certain quality of imaginativeness, of what is termed 'poetry.' No matter how simple was his subject, he instinctively saw it from its most beautiful, its most romantic side. If it had little or no beauty or romance of its own, he would still throw an indefinable charm round it by some gleam of light, some veiling mist, some far-away distance, some alluring sense of mystery, of 'infinity.' And Turner was a true poet, although he had little enough of the look or the manners of one. Throughout his life he was a reader and a voluminous writer of poetry, but his want of education debarred him from ever expressing himself coherently in verse. The same cause, together with his lack of a sense of humour, interfered also with the perfect expression of his art, especially in his classical and religious pictures, and prevented him from seeing what was incongruous or at times unpleasing in them. But only a poet deep-down could have won as he did from Nature her most intimate secrets; could so

have caught and so inimitably have portrayed her every mood and charm.

And it is this impress of his deep love for the beauty and the grandeur of Nature—a love as strong as Wordsworth's, as intense as Shelley's—which is perhaps the greatest cause of the enduring attractiveness of Turner's work. Without it, he would never have toiled as he did all his life, from dawn to dark, year in and year out, observing and recording in those nineteen thousand studies every kind of natural scenery, every changing contour of mist and cloud, every differing form and structure of tree, every movement or reflection in water, every transient effect of light, storm, wind or weather.

Then he often had a deep meaning in his pictures, beyond what was to be seen on the surface, beyond, perhaps, what he himself could have always explained. Sometimes, no doubt, it was far-fetched, sometimes fantastic, yet it gives a character to his art which mere technical skill or perfect design do not by themselves attain. By the modern school of landscapists this would probably be regarded as a defect or even a heresy. Pictorial art, they say, should not be 'literary,' should not be intellectual. But to me it seems that the work of the highest artists—of Leonardo, Michael Angelo, Holbein, Rembrandt, for example—almost invariably appeals to the intellect as well as to the senses. Mind, sensibly or insensibly, intentionally or unintentionally, speaks to mind. As has been well said *apropos* of Ruskin's writings on Turner: "What if Ruskin's torch lights "up some beauty that the painter himself was never aware of? "As a great man's inventions will carry more readings than his "own, so the meaning of a great painter is not to be limited to his "expressed or palpable intentions. There is a harmony between "the imaginings of both and Nature, which opens out an infinite "range of significance and supports an infinite variety of inter-"pretations."

After Turner had attained manhood—say from 1807 onwards—his *creative* power constantly and increasingly made itself felt. It is more evident in his oil pictures than in his water-colours, because in the latter, more or less throughout his life, hs was employed on illustrative, topographical, work. But at an early period it is visible in his drawings, notably in his *Liber Studiorum* (1807–1819). Leaving aside actual landscapes such as *Solway Moss*, *Ben Arthur*, etc., his creative, imaginative power is seen in such subjects as *Æsacus and Hesperie*, *Peat Bog*, *Procris and Cephalus*, *The Lost Sailor* and other plates of the *Liber*. It also appears from time to time in later drawings. Yet a recent biographer has advanced the astonishing theory that, whatever were Turner's merits, up to almost the end of

his life he was not a "creative" artist, merely an *illustrator*, and this idea has been characteristically caught up and repeated by the latest German writer on Modern Art. But is there any truth in it? I think not. The painter of *The Frosty Morning*, and *Crossing the Brook* (National Gallery); of *The Guardship at the Nore* (Lady Wantage); of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and *Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus* (National Gallery); of *The Shipwreck* (National Gallery), and a dozen other great Sea Pictures, not a "creative" artist? The draughtsman of *Chryses* (Mrs. T. Ashton), *The Land's End* ("Southern Coast"), *The Longships Lighthouse* ("England and Wales"), *The Alps at Daybreak* and *The Vision of Columbus* ("Rogers's Poems"), *The Plains of Troy* ("Byron's Poems"), *The Mustering of the Warrior Angels* ("Milton's Poems")? If these, and scores of others which might be added, are not examples of "creative" art, where are "creative" landscapes to be found? Is Martin's *Plains of Heaven* to be regarded as the type? Or is there no such thing as "creative" landscape art? But, after all, does the question need arguing? May one not just as well ask whether Botticelli, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Rubens, Rembrandt, were "creative" artists?

Of Turner's technical skill in water-colour, there is no need to speak; his command of his material was absolute and has never been equalled. And his sense of design, of balance, of rhythm—of what is termed "style"—was always present. He had caught it at the outset of his career from his close study of Richard Wilson, who had inherited it as a tradition from Gaspar Poussin, Claude, and the painters of the seventeenth century. Rarely is there anything tentative about his drawings. They are decisive—the design was almost invariably seen by him as a whole, from the beginning. Often his work did not please him, and if it was finished it was discarded; if unfinished, it was carried no further—as may be seen in several of the drawings recently (1908) exhibited at the National Gallery, and a good many of the oil pictures at the Tate Gallery. He was also emphatically a great colourist—one of the greatest; during the latter half of his life he thought in colour, and composed in colour, and it was with him an integral part of every design. That is why his drawings can never be adequately reproduced by ordinary photography. During middle life, as has been pointed out, his colour at times became forced and florid, but it was never more pure, never more beautiful, never more noble, than in his latest sketches.

At times, no doubt, Turner's water-colours, especially those executed between 1820 and 1836, have a tendency to undue complexity of design, and to overcrowding both of subject and lights. Possibly to some extent this was due to the prevailing

standard of English art and English taste at that time. Then, perhaps even more than now, high finish was too often unduly insisted on. But you will never find too high finish or over-crowding in the drawings which he made *for himself!* His figures, also, were frequently unsatisfactory. It was not that he could not draw them—at first they were dainty and careful, as may be seen in the two early drawings, Plates I. and III. But in his later years he seemed to regard figures simply as points of light, colour or composition—they were always effective as such—and he often treated them carelessly—sometimes even coarsely—to the detriment of some of his otherwise most beautiful works.

Turner is often claimed by the militant school of landscapists of to-day as one of the first and greatest 'impressionists.' In a certain sense no doubt this is true, but his 'impressionism,' it seems to me, was wholly different in nature from theirs.

During his life, as we have seen, he made thousands of sketches, some slight, some elaborate, of places, scenery, and natural effects—'shorthand memoranda,' so to speak—many of which may certainly be called 'impressionist.' *But all these were founded on, or were intended to add to, his accurate, minute and exhaustive study of natural forms, and a draughtsmanship which has probably never been equalled by any other landscape painter.*

Then, as is notorious, he frequently altered certain features of landscapes or buildings to suit the requirements of his pictures—their symmetry, their accent, their colour-scheme—or in order to convey some suggestion as to their meaning. In a letter still preserved, he declares himself opposed to literalism in landscape—"mere map-making" he terms it. And when for any reason he thus altered the actual features of a scene, he still almost always contrived to preserve the *impression* of it as a whole—usually under its best aspect, at its choicest moment. In this sense also he was an 'impressionist.'

Again, when towards the close of his life he began to attempt the representation (mainly in oil colour) of pure sunlight—as in his latest *Venice* pictures; or of form in swiftest movement—as in *Rain, Speed and Steam;* or of the mighty contending forces of Nature—as in his *Snow Storm off Harwich*, he painted *such subjects* in the only method by which they could be intelligibly rendered. In the same way Whistler, in his Nocturnes, demonstrated for the first time in Western art, the beauty of prosaic and even ugly objects, seen in dim light. Both perforce adopted the 'impressionist' method, because it was the only effective, indeed the only possible one.

But to me it appears that there is all the difference in the world between *these* phases of 'impressionist' art and the principles of the modern landscape school, whose works a brilliant set of writers in the press of to-day are continually calling upon us to admire. The advanced 'impressionists' both in France and in England seem to go out of their way to represent *the ordinary aspects of nature* with a manifest determination to avoid any but the vaguest rendering of form, no matter how clearly defined in such circumstances those forms may seem to ordinary Philistine vision. They also ordinarily abjure as 'literary' any kind of appeal to the intellectual faculties, and apparently confine their aim to the production of a more or less startling, but generally cleverly managed patterning of light, shade, and colour, obtained usually by means of masses of coarse, solid, and often ragged pigment, carefully arranged so that the effect intended may be found, like a fire-plug, at a certain exact, calculated spot. Surely Turner's 'impressionism' was far removed from this? Surely it is hard that he should be charged with being the precursor of the landscape school to which I have alluded, whatever may be its merits?

Possibly it is too soon as yet to predict what will be Turner's ultimate place in art. Like every really great artist (I use the word in its widest sense) he will be judged, not by his defects or his mistakes—even if they be many and palpable—but by the *heights* to which he attained, and the mark which he has left for others to follow. For myself, I believe that if his water-colours are allowed to remain unfaded for future generations, they, along with his best oil pictures, will be counted worthy to entitle him to a place amongst the greatest painters of all centuries and all schools.

W. G. RAWLINSON.

[In common with the Editor of *The Studio*, I desire to acknowledge my deep obligations to the various owners of valuable drawings by Turner, who have kindly allowed them to be reproduced here. There were, however, others which I should like to have seen represented, but as these were not available, the Editor desired to replace them with examples from my own collection. This must explain what will otherwise seem the undue proportion of the latter.—W. G. R.]

THE TURNER DRAWINGS IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON. BY A. J. FINBERG.

THE usual way of painting a landscape nowadays is for the artist to take his easel and canvas out into the fields, and to work as far as possible with the scene he is representing before his eyes. The scene, with the artist's chosen effect, is of course constantly changing, so the artist can work only for a short time each day. The effect itself will probably last for a period varying from a couple of minutes to about half an hour, according to circumstances; but the painter may be usefully employed in getting his work into condition for about an hour before the effect is due, and he may work on for perhaps another hour while the effect is still fresh in his memory. As one sitting of this kind will not enable the artist to carry his work far, it is necessary that he should return day after day to the scene; and if he is determined to paint it entirely on the spot, he must be prepared to devote some months at least to the work.

The habit of painting and finishing pictures entirely out of doors was, I believe, introduced by the Pre-Raphaelites during the fifties, but before this, Constable and other artists had worked largely from rather elaborate colour studies made out of doors. Turner did not work at all in this way. All his pictures were painted in the studio, and generally from very slight pencil sketches. So far as I know he never made even a slight colour study from nature for any of his pictures.

As the methods of work employed by the great artists are of very great interest, I think it will be worth while to take one of his well-known works and to trace its evolution somewhat in detail. The beautiful drawing of *Norham Castle*, reproduced here (Plate XIV.), will do very well for this purpose.

This drawing was made to be engraved in a series known as the "Rivers of England." Charles Turner's really fine mezzotint of it was published in 1824, so the drawing must have been made at least a year or two before this date. The pencil sketch on which it was based was made some quarter of a century earlier—to be quite accurate, in the summer or autumn of 1797.

At that time Turner was a young man of twenty-two, but he had already made his mark as one of the best topographical and antiquarian draughtsmen of the day. He had been a regular exhibitor at the Royal Academy for eight years, and publishers and amateurs were beginning to compete for his productions. It was his habit every summer to map out for himself a lengthy sketching tour, his aim being to accumulate in his portfolio a pencil drawing

made by himself of every building or natural feature that he might be called upon to illustrate. These subjects were dictated by the taste of the time, which generally ran towards the ruined abbeys and castles of the middle ages. As Turner's subject-matter was prescribed for him in this way, he did not, like the modern artist, have to waste any time looking for promising subjects. He had merely to study the numerous guide-books that were even then in existence, to make out a list of the more important castles, abbeys, and Gothic buildings, and to hurry from one to the other as fast as the coaches or his own sturdy legs could carry him. The methodical and stolidly business-like manner in which he set about and carried through this part of his work is calculated to shock the gushing and casual temperament of the artist of to-day.

Turner's programme in 1797 was an extensive one, and, what is much more remarkable, he carried it out. He seems to have taken the coach into Derbyshire, as he had already appropriated everything of interest in the Midland counties. He carried two sketch books with him, each bound handsomely in calf, the smaller with four heavy brass clasps, the larger with seven. The pages in the smaller book measure about 10½ by 8¼ inches, those of the larger about 14½ by 10½. Both these books are now in the National Gallery collection, and will shortly, I hope, be made accessible to students and the general public.

The campaign opens with two drawings of, I think, *Wingfield Manor*, then comes a church with a tall spire on a hill which I cannot identify; then we have one drawing of *Rotherham Bridge* with the chapel on it, then one of *Conisborough Castle*, single views of the exterior and interior of *Doncaster Church*, three different views of the ruins of *Pontefract Church*, and then two neat drawings of the *Chantry on the Bridge at Wakefield*. It is not till he gets to Kirkstall Abbey that the artist seems to pause in his breathless rush to the North. There are no less than nine drawings of this subject, all made from different points of view; one of these leaves containing the sketch of the Crypt—from which Sir John Soane's impressive water-colour was made—contains just a fragment of colour, and has been for many years among the drawings exhibited on the ground floor of the National Gallery. In this way we can follow Turner to Knaresborough, Ripon, Fountains and Easby Abbeys, Richmond, Barnard Castle, Egglestone Abbey and Durham, and then along the coast to Warkworth, Alnwick, Dunstanborough, Bamborough and Holy Island. Judging from the drawings, I think it probable that Turner spent the best part of a day at Holy Island, but he got to Berwick in time to draw a general view of the town and bridge, and to make a slight sketch with his limited gamut of colours—black, blue, and

yellow only—of the evening effect. The next morning he was up in time to see the sun rise from behind the towers of Norham Castle, and to trace a slight and hurried pencil outline of the main features of the scene. There is only this one sketch of the subject, and it does not contain the slightest suggestion of light and shade or of effect. But there were Kelso and Melrose and Dryburgh and Jedburgh Abbeys close by waiting to be drawn, and Turner evidently felt he must hurry on. Having drawn these ruins in his neat and precise way he turned south and struck into Cumberland. In the larger sketch book a drawing inscribed *Keswick* follows immediately after one of the views of *Melrose Abbey*. Then comes *Cockermouth Castle*, *the Borrowdale*, *Buttermere*, *St. John's Vale*, *Grasmere*, *Rydal*, *Langdale*, and *Ulleswater with Helvellyn in the distance*. Then follow in rapid succession *Ambleside Mill*, *Windermere*, *Coniston*, *Furness Abbey*, *Lancaster*, and after a single drawing of *Bolton Abbey* we find ourselves in York, where the Cathedral and the ruins of St. Mary's Abbey and Bootham Bar must have detained the artist for perhaps two or three days. The tour, however, is not yet at an end, for the Hon. Mr. Lascelles (who became Earl of Harewood in 1820) wants some drawings of Harewood House and of the ruins of Harewood Castle, and Mr. Howlett wants some subjects to engrave in his forthcoming "Views in the County of Lincoln." It is, therefore, through Howden, Louth, Boston, Sleaford, and Peterborough that Turner makes his way back to London. He must have been back by September, for among the drawings exhibited at the Royal Academy in the following May was one described as "*A Study in September of the Fern House, Mr. Lock's Park, Mickleham, Surrey.*" He can, therefore, hardly have been away much more than three months, if so long, but his strenuous vacation had yielded an abundant crop of useful material.

It must have been October before Turner was fairly back in his studio in Hand Court, Maiden Lane, and had settled down to work up this material. By the following April he had four important oil paintings and six water-colours ready for the Exhibition. One of these oil paintings (the *Dunstanborough Castle*) now hangs in the Melbourne National Gallery, to which it was presented by the late Duke of Westminster; two others (*Winesdale, Yorkshire—an Autumnal Morning* and *Morning amongst the Coniston Fells*) hang in the little Octagon room in Trafalgar Square, and the fourth is on loan to the Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter. This is the *Buttermere Lake, with part of Cromack Water*, a really fine painting, though it has darkened considerably. As the first important oil painting in which Turner's genius was clearly manifested, I should rejoice to see it hanging in Trafalgar Square. The pencil drawing on which it was based contains some work in water-colour, possibly made direct from

nature, but the details and general effect have been entirely recast in the finished work. Among the water-colours were the gloomy and superb *Kirkstall Abbey*, now in the Soane Museum, to which I have already referred, and the drawing of *Norham Castle*, with which we are now more particularly concerned.

The drawing exhibited in 1798 is not the one here reproduced. The exhibited drawing is probably the one now in the possession of Mr. Laundy Walters. A photographic reproduction of it was published in Sir Walter Armstrong's "Turner" (p. 34), and it is worth pausing a moment to compare this with the original pencil sketch and to consider in exactly what relation these two drawings stand to each other.

The usual way of describing the process by which a slight sketch from nature is converted into a finished drawing is to say that the artist copied his sketch as far as it went and then relied upon his memory for the further elaboration that was required. An artist's memory is assumed to consist of images of the scenes he has witnessed, which he has some mysterious power of storing somewhere in his mind, something like, I suppose, the undeveloped exposures in a Kodak. According to this theory we should have to assume that the particular sight of the sun rising behind Norham Towers which had greeted Turner on the morning he hurried from Berwick to Kelso had been treasured up in the inner recesses of his consciousness, and then some months afterwards, when the appropriate moment came, he had only to select this particular image from among the millions of other images in the same mysterious storehouse, to develop it and copy it on to his canvas. I need hardly add that this desperate theory is quite fanciful and absurd, and in flat contradiction to the teachings of modern psychology.

A description that would not be open to such objections would run something like this: When we are dealing with the processes of artistic creation we have to assume an intelligent human agent, and analogies drawn from purely mechanical sources can only mislead us. We must not assume that an artist's senses and intellect work like the mechanism of a camera, or in any other abnormal way, unless we have some strong evidence to support us. And we must also remember that a visual image is a useful abstraction in psychology, but in the conscious life of an intelligent human being it is merely an element within the ordinary life of thought and feeling. Let us therefore assume that Turner not only made no effort to retain the exact visual impression of the scene in question, but that he did not even attempt to separate this impression from the general whole of thought and feeling in which it was experienced. The particular matter of sense-perception would then

become incorporated in the general idea of the object—in the ordinary way in which sense qualities are preserved in ideas. When Turner therefore sat down to make his picture, what he would have prominently and clearly before his mind would be a general idea of Norham Castle as a ruined border fortress, a scene of many a bloody fray and of much bygone splendour and suffering. In short, his idea would be what the art-criticism of the Henley type used to describe contemptuously as "literary"; that is, it was steeped in the colours of the historical imagination, and was practically the same as that which a man like Sir Walter Scott or any cultivated person of the present time would associate with the same object. Instead, therefore, of having a single image before his mind which he had merely to copy, Turner started with a complex idea, which might, indeed, have been expressed more or less adequately in the terms of some other art, but which he chose on this occasion to express in pictorial terms.

In this way we can understand why Turner did, as a matter of fact, frequently and constantly attempt to express his ideas in the form of verbal poetry, and why, in the drawing we are now considering, he felt himself justified not only in filling out his sketch with details that were neither there nor in the real scene, but also in taking considerable liberties with the facts contained in the sketch, altering them and falsifying them in ways that could not be defended if his aim had been to reproduce the actual scene itself. The colouring too of Mr. Walter's drawing owes much more to Turner's study of Wilson's pictures than to his visual memory of natural scenes; that is to say, the colour is used as an instrument of expression,—as a means to bring the imagination and feelings of the spectator into harmony with the artist's ideas, as well as to indicate in the clearest possible manner that it was not the artist's intention to represent the actual scene in its prosaic details.

This picture, with the others exhibited in 1798, settled the question for Turner's brother artists and for himself that he was a genuinely imaginative artist and not a merely clever topographical draughtsman. The following year he was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy, at the early age of twenty-four, and throughout his long life he always regarded himself as entitled to take any liberties with actual topographical facts that the expression of his ideas demanded.

The success of the first *Norham Castle* drawing induced Turner to repeat the subject several times. The late Mrs. Thwaites had another water-colour of it in her collection, there are at least three unfinished versions in the National Gallery, and I have seen a version of it in oil. The subject was engraved in the "Liber"

from what purported to be the picture in the possession of the Hon. Mr. Lascelles, but really from a fresh design made by the artist. Then Turner painted the subject again for Mr. Fawkes of Farnley, and again, about 1822 or 1823, he made the drawing for the "Rivers of England" series, here reproduced. What is so interesting in all this is that the details in each of these versions are different, yet they all seem to have been based on the same pencil sketch. The relative size of the castle varies in each drawing, as well as the details of its embrasures and crumbling masonry; the character of the river banks also varies. In the earlier versions the right bank is steep and rocky, as suiting the solemn and gloomy effect of the subject; in the latest version, where the humble pastoral life of the present is thrown more into prominence, this bank becomes flat and peopled with fishermen, their boats and cows.

In one of the many anecdotes told of Turner he is represented as saying to an artist who had complained of the disappointment he had experienced on revisiting a certain place, "Don't you know you must paint your impressions"—or words to that effect. I don't know how true the story is—and I may confess that I have almost got into the habit of disbelieving *all* the stories told about Turner—but whether true or not this particular anecdote is certainly well invented. Turner knew quite well how large a part his subjective feelings and ideas played in all his work, and it made him shy of revisiting places that had once impressed him. But when he spoke of his "impressions" we must be careful not to suppose that he could have used the expression in the way it is often used now. He did not abstract his particular visual impressions from the emotional and ideational context in which they were experienced. In so far as Impressionism means this kind of abstraction, Turner was never an impressionist. And as his first ideas of places were steeped in the colouring of his own subjective life, so his ideas were ever taking on different hues as his temper and character changed. In this way he could use the same sketch again and again and always get different effects from it; the sensuous datum was merely a point of departure for each fresh improvisation, a form into which he could pour his meditations, but a flexible, plastic form which readily took the shape of its spiritual content.

These considerations may help us to understand what is apt at first to strike the student of Turner's drawings and sketches as strange and incomprehensible. Turner was always sketching from nature, and often making drawings that contain an amazing wealth of detail and definition, yet the usefulness of his sketches seemed to vary in inverse ratio to their definition and to the time spent upon them. The beautiful drawings never seemed to lead to anything,

all the pictures being painted by preference from the slightest and vaguest sketches. Thus the sketch book which contains the sketch of *Norham Castle* is filled with over ninety drawings, most of them full of detail and delightfully precise and graceful in handling. Turner made good use of most of this material, but the most prolific "breeding" subject—to use one of Richard Wilson's expressions—was unquestionably the hurried scribble of Norham, which was so slight as not to indicate even the general shape of the ruined tower with precision, and which left the number of windows or embrasures entirely undetermined. But when we see how Turner used his sketches we can easily understand that this absence of definition must often have been a positive advantage to him when he came to paint his pictures. There was less "to put him out," fewer obstacles in the way of his subjective utterance, the form was more fluid and tractable to his immediate purpose. The more detailed studies were of course not wasted, for the knowledge they gave him enabled him to fill out the slightest hints of his "breeding" subjects with an inexhaustible wealth of plausible detail.

The National Gallery collection contains just on three hundred of Turner's sketch books, and practically the whole of his work done immediately in the presence of nature. This data enables us to speak with absolute authority upon the difficult question as to the relation between Turner's art and nature. They prove that he very seldom, if ever, painted a picture simply "out of his head." In everything he did—even, I believe, in the case of what have been called his classical nonsense pictures—there was a nucleus of immediately perceived fact. This sensuous basis is seldom, if ever, absent from his work, but it is invariably overlaid and distorted by the purely subjective forces of the artist's personality, which appropriate the data of sense, and mould them into any shape they choose. It is impossible, especially since "Modern Painters" was written, to overlook the important part played by natural fact in all of Turner's creations, but it is just as important not to overlook the equally obvious and certain truth that Turner never uses nature simply for its own sake, but only as a means of expression. The methods employed in the particular case we have just studied are, with few exceptions, the methods which he adopted during the whole of his career.

Yet Turner did undoubtedly upon occasion paint in oil directly from nature. An instance of this kind is described by Sir Charles Eastlake in "Thornbury" (p. 153, 3rd edition). Eastlake met Turner during his second visit to Devonshire, probably in the summer of 1813, and accompanied him to a cottage near Calstock, the residence of Eastlake's aunt, where they stayed for a few days.

Another artist was with them, a Mr. Ambrose Johns, of Plymouth. It was during their rambles in the neighbourhood of Calstock that Turner gathered the material for his picture of "*Crossing the Brook*." Eastlake says that "Turner made his sketches in pencil and by stealth," that is to say, he did not like to have people looking over his shoulder while he was at work. The sketch book Turner used on this occasion is with the others in the National Gallery. But after the three artists had returned to Plymouth, "in the neighbourhood of which he (Turner) remained some weeks, Mr. Johns fitted up a small portable painting-box, containing some prepared paper for oil sketches, as well as the other necessary materials. When Turner halted at a scene and seemed inclined to sketch it, Johns produced the inviting box, and the great artist, finding everything ready to his hand, immediately began to work. As he sometimes wanted assistance in the use of the box, the presence of Johns was indispensable, and after a few days he made his oil sketches freely in our presence. Johns accompanied him always; I was only with them occasionally. Turner seemed pleased when the rapidity with which those sketches were done was talked of; for, departing from his habitual reserve in the instance of his pencil sketches, he made no difficulty of showing them. On one occasion, when, on his return after a sketching ramble to a country residence belonging to my father, near Plympton, the day's work was shown, he himself remarked that one of the sketches (and perhaps the best) was done in less than half an hour." "On my enquiring afterwards," Sir Charles Eastlake adds, "what had become of those sketches, Turner replied that they were worthless, in consequence, as he supposed, of some defect in the preparation of the paper; all the grey tints, he observed, had nearly disappeared. Although I did not implicitly rely on that statement, I do not remember to have seen any of them afterwards."

There are about a dozen small oil sketches of Devonshire subjects in the National Gallery, which are doubtless part of those made under the circumstances described by Sir Charles Eastlake. They are made on a brownish millboard, prepared with a thin coating of paint and size. On the back of one of them there happens to be some lettering showing that Johns had laid violent hands on the covers of some parts of William Young Ottley's "British Gallery of Pictures," then being issued serially. Several of these paintings have long been hung among the exhibited drawings; *e.g.*, Nos. 746, 750, 754, 758, and one, No. 849, which has somehow got the obviously incorrect title of *Bridge over River Lugwy, Capel Curig*. These paintings have undoubtedly sunk very much into the absorbent millboard, thus proving that Turner's remark to

Eastlake about the disappearance of the grey tints—which he "did not implicitly rely on"—was justified. But otherwise the work is in good condition, and I have very little doubt that when Mr. Buttery comes to take them in hand, he will be able to bring them back to something like their original freshness. The chief point of interest with regard to them, from our present point of view, is the curious fact that Turner does not seem to have made the slightest use of them in any of the Devonshire pictures he painted on his return. He evidently found his tiny little pencil sketches much more suggestive and adaptable to his purposes. Even the large oil picture of *Crossing the Brook* is based entirely on his slight and rapidly made little pencil notes. Another point of interest is that even when painting in oil face to face with nature he did not merely copy what he had in front of him. As our illustration shows, these sketches are as carefully composed as his pictures. They are indeed only technically sketches from nature; in reality they are designs for pictures or pictures in miniature, though they happen to have been painted out of doors. Even in working direct from nature Turner remained firmly entrenched in his artistic position as the master of nature. He still retained his power of selection, taking what suited his purpose, ignoring the rest, and supplementing from the stores of his own knowledge what for his purpose were the defects of the momentary image before his eyes.

The fact that Turner always worked in this way makes it exceedingly difficult to separate his sketches from nature from the studies or designs for his pictures. Throughout his sketch books and amongst his loose drawings there are a large number of sketches in colour, and one's first impulse is to assume that these were made immediately from nature. But careful observation shows that Turner was in the constant habit of working over his pencil sketches in colour when away from the scenes he had depicted. In this way the beautiful little sketch of "*Edinburgh from St. Margaret's Loch*," here reproduced (Plate VI.), is much more probably the draft of a picture the artist had in his mind's eye than a study from nature. But the point whether such a drawing was made "on the spot" or not is relatively unimportant; what is more important is to realise how very small a part the merely imitative or representative study of the colour and tone (as opposed to form) of nature played in Turner's work. His colour is never merely descriptive. The whole bent of his mind is so essentially pictorial that, whether he works face to face with nature or from what is loosely called "memory," his slightest sketch as well as his most elaborate work is always an attempt to express a subjective conception, and never a merely literal transcript of what is given in sense-perception.

Perhaps the most important group of drawings in the national collection are those which Turner made during the last ten years of his working life, *i.e.*, between 1835 and 1845. These drawings were not made for sale or for exhibition, hence Mr. Ruskin's description of them as "delight drawings," because they were done entirely for the artist's own pleasure and delight. Several of them are reproduced in this volume, among them the beautiful sketch of "*Lucerne*" (Plate XXI.) realized for Mr. Ruskin in 1842, the almost equally fine "*Bellinzona, from the road to Locarno*" (Plate XXIV.), and "*Zurich*" (Plate XXVII.).

These inimitable and delightful sketches have been very widely admired, as they deserve to be, but they have also been praised, somewhat perversely as it seems to me, for their truth and accuracy of representation. As Mr. Ruskin has pointed out, these sketches "are not, strictly speaking, sketches from nature; but plans or designs of pictures which Turner, if he had had time, would have made of each place. They indicate, therefore, a perfectly formed conception of the finished picture; and they are of exactly the same value as memoranda would be, if made by Turner's own hand, of pictures of his not in our possession. They are just to be regarded as quick descriptions or reminiscences of noble pictures." Mr. Ruskin is also unquestionably correct when he adds "that nothing but the pencilling in them was done on the spot, and not always that. Turner used to walk about a town with a roll of thin paper in his pocket, and make a few scratches upon a sheet or two of it, which were so much shorthand indication of all he wished to remember. When he got to his inn in the evening, he completed the pencilling rapidly, and added as much colour as was needed to record his plan of the picture" ("Ruskin on Pictures," pp. 86-7).

It is not my intention now to dwell upon the beauty of these incomparable drawings, on their passionate intensity and emotional sincerity, their nervous eloquence and elusive suggestiveness. The point I wish to insist on at present is that they must not be regarded as attempts to reproduce or imitate the merely superficial qualities of physical nature, as attempts to give an accurate representation of effects of air or light, or of the shapes and forms of mountain, water or cloud. The artist is not immersed in the definite character of physical objects. He seems to feel that as a spiritual and self-conscious being he is something higher than the merely natural, and it is as modes of expression of human freedom and self-consciousness that these lyrical fragments must be regarded.

The colour and tone of Turner's work must therefore be taken as strictly ideal, that is, as a medium of subjective expression, as a mode of spiritual manifestation, and not as an attempt to represent

the merely abstract qualities of sense-perception. And what is true of Turner's colour and tone is also true of his form. I doubt if he ever made a tolerably careful and elaborate drawing of a natural scene from the beginning to the end of his long career—nearly all his elaborate drawings being of architectural subjects. But instead of the prosaic and plodding drawings that other artists make (see, for example, the elaborate pencil studies of trees by Constable in the Victoria and Albert Museum), we find hundreds and hundreds of nervous, eager pencil sketches. When we come to study these ravishing sketches with care we make the astonishing discovery that the bugbear of the drawing school, the prosaic accumulation of particular physical facts known in art academies as "nature," is simply a hideous abstraction of the theoretical mind. Nature, in this sense of the word, never existed for Turner. The world he saw around him was replete with intelligence, was permeated with spirit; where other artists see only the bare, unrelated physical fact and sensuous surface, his mind is already busy with the inner and invisible significance, and his cunning hand is instantly shaping forth a pictorial embodiment of his own insight and passionate convictions.

On the whole, then, this was Turner's consistent attitude towards nature, though of course, in his earlier years, his sketches were comparatively less swift and eloquent than they afterwards became. And there was indeed a short period during which the merely physical fact was forced into undue prominence. This period culminated in the first visit to Italy in 1819–1820. Here the novelty of the scenery and buildings stimulated the thirst for detailed observation which had been gradually growing on Turner during the previous six or seven years. But in England the very quickness and strength of his intuitions had always prevented the desire for precise observation from gaining the upper hand. In Italy his powers of intuition were useless. He was disoriented. Everything disconcerted and thwarted him. His rapid glance no longer penetrated to the inner essence of the scenes around him. He did not understand the people and their ways, and their relation to their surroundings. For a time he seemed to become less certain than usual of his artistic mission. But he set to work with his usual pluck and energy to assimilate his strange surroundings by tireless observation of the outside. The result was a vast accumulation of disorganized or of only partially organized impressions.

It is conceded on all hands that Turner's artistic work went all to pieces as a result of his Italian experiences. The *Bay of Baiæ* contains faults altogether new in his completed works. Even the feeblest of his earlier works had been animated by some central idea or emotion, to which all the parts were subordinated, and which

infused into them whatever of life or significance they possessed In the *Bay of Baiæ* the artist has an unusual quantity of material on his hands, but he can neither find nor invent a pictorial idea to give coherence to his disconnected observations. The picture is made up of bits of visual experiences elaborately dovetailed into one another, but which absolutely refuse to combine into any kind of conceptual unity.

Yet if we confine our attention to the merely formal and abstract side of art, there is assuredly much to move us even to enthusiastic admiration among the immense quantity of sketches accumulated during this Italian visit. The very fact that Turner's inspiration was checked prevented his sketches from possessing their wonted rudimentary or forward-pointing character. Instead of being hasty drafts of the pictures that thronged instantly into his mind upon contact with the scenes of his native land, they became more like the drawings which less completely equipped creative artists are in the habit of making ; they became "studies" in the modern use of the term. The conditions of their production gave full play to Turner's marvellous powers of draughtsmanship and formal design. Before drawings like *Rome from Monte Mario* who can help waxing enthusiastic over the exquisitely deft and graceful play of hand, the subtle observation and the almost superhuman mastery of the design ? No wonder Mr. Ruskin has declared that "no drawings in the world are to be named with these . . .. as lessons in landscape drawing" ("Ruskin on Pictures," p. 157). But before assenting wholly to this dictum we must remember that, in spite of all their attractiveness, Turner found these drawings worse than useless for his general artistic purposes, and that only bad and foolish pictures came from them ; and the more carefully we study the matter the more clearly do we see that nothing but bad and foolish pictures could come from work in which the spirit of curiosity and of cold and accurate observation is predominant.

We have fixed our attention thus far upon the sketches and drawings made from nature in the National Gallery collection, to the exclusion of the finished water-colours. This may seem all the more inexcusable, as I have preferred to treat these sketches rather with regard to their bearing upon the artist's finished work—as stages in the development of the complete work of art—than as independent productions which can be accepted entirely for their own sake. But in a short paper like the present it is impossible to do justice to all the sides of such an important collection as the Drawings of the Turner Bequest. Numerically, the finished drawings form only a small fraction of the whole collection—about two hundred out of a total of over 20,000 drawings. Among them are about two-thirds of the "Rivers of France" drawings, and most of the "Ports" and

"Rivers of England," and Rogers's "Vignettes." These drawings were engraved during Turner's lifetime and under his active superintendence; they are, therefore, amongst the best known of his works. The whole of the finished drawings have, moreover, been constantly on exhibition for more than fifty years. There remains, therefore, little either of praise or blame to be said of them that has not already been said many times. While, on the other hand, the studies and sketches are only now on the point of being made accessible to the public.

The practically complete series of Turner's sketches and studies from nature seems to call for comprehensive treatment. Their careful study throws a wholly new and unexpected light upon the fundamental and essential qualities of Turner's attitude towards nature, and therefore upon the essential character and limitations of his art. Or where the light is not altogether unexpected—as it would not be perhaps in the case of a diligent and methodical student of Turner's completed works—the sketches amplify and illustrate in an abundant and forcible way what before could only have been surmised. I propose, therefore, to devote the remainder of my limited space to an attempt to indicate as briefly as possible the main features of Turner's conception of nature, as it is revealed in his sketches, and to point out its importance both for the proper understanding of his finished work and for its bearing upon some adverse criticisms that have been brought against his work.

In my opening remarks I ventured to contrast Turner's attitude towards nature with the attitude of the majority of contemporary artists. My intention in thus opposing these two different methods of work was not to suggest that one of them was either right or wrong in itself, or that one way was necessarily better or worse than the other. My intention was exactly the opposite. There is not one type of art production to which all artists must conform, and two totally different methods of procedure may each be positively right and equally valid. I will even go farther than this and confess that I regard the present-day method of working from nature as the only right and proper way of attaining the results that are aimed at. But it is the result, the purpose of the artist, that justifies the means, and this applies with just as much force to Turner's way of working as to the modern way. To condemn Turner's procedure, therefore, simply because it differs from that now in vogue, would be as unwise and unfair as to condemn the modern way because it differed from his. Different conceptions of the aim and scope of art involve different attitudes towards nature, and necessitate different methods of study.

Let us begin with the current conception—the conception of the landscape artist of to-day and of the public for which he works. The

aim of this art is what is called "naturalness," that is, the picture should be made to look as much like nature as possible. The standard of excellence here is just the ordinary common appearance of physical reality. A picture that looks like nature is good, and one that looks "unnatural" is therefore bad. This kind of art is capable of giving a great deal of innocent pleasure to people who like to be reminded of scenes they love or are interested in. But it has its limits. It cannot go beyond the bare physical world. And it is bound to treat even this limited area of experience from a strictly limited point of view. It is bound to take the physical world as something which exists in entire independence of the spectator, as something which is indeed given in sense-perception, but which the spectator emphatically finds and does not make. Now so far as we take nature in this sense we have to do with an external power which is utterly indifferent to our merely human aims and purposes, and the artist can only look upon himself as a passive recipient, a *tabula rasa*, on which external nature is reflected. This is the standpoint of the prosaic intelligence, the level upon which much of the ordinary reflection and discussion of the day moves.

But man is not really a passive mirror in which a foreign nature is reflected, nor is he satisfied merely to submit himself to natural influences and vicissitudes. Man is never really satisfied to take the world as he finds it, but sets to work to transform it into what he feels it ought to be. The social and political world, with its realms of morality, art and religion, came into existence as a protest against the merely natural. In this world, created and sustained by human intelligence and will, the physical world is not abolished or destroyed, but it is transformed into a more or less willing accomplice of a strange and higher power. It is in this new form which nature assumes under the sway of intelligence and will that we find it in Turner's works.* In his presence the external world loses its stubborn indifference to human aims and becomes saturated with purely human aspiration and emotion. Its colours and shapes cease to belong to the merely physical world. They become instead the garment in which the inward spiritual nature of the artist robes itself. Nature in this new aspect is no longer a merely hostile and mechanical system of laws; a soul has been breathed into it which we recognize as identical with our own.

Now it is evident that these two kinds of art, the passive and

* Turner's conception of nature, I may remark, is identical with that of Sir Joshua Reynolds, who says: "My notion of nature comprehends not only the forms which nature produces, but also the nature and internal fabric and organisation . . . of the human mind and imagination." (Seventh Discourse.)

the active, with their totally dissimilar aims, cannot and ought not to represent nature in the same way. The art which uses nature as a medium for the expression of ideas and feelings cannot attain its object by representing physical objects in the simple and direct way appropriate to the art which aims merely at naturalness. The artist's intention must make itself manifest even in the manner in which he represents physical objects,—indeed, he has no other way of expressing his ideas. The active or creative artist will therefore make it clear that he has broken entirely with the disconnected, accidental and prosaic look of everyday existence which it is the one aim of the passive artist to retain.

From this point of view the charges that are often brought against Turner, that his colour is forced and unnatural, will leave us cold and indifferent. To make such an objection is merely a proof of mental confusion. The creative artist *must* break with the prosaic vision of nature, if only to make it evident that his objects are not there for their own sake and for their immediate effect, but to call forth a response and echo in the mind of the observer. Turner's colour—"dyed in the ardours of the atmosphere"—is one of his most potent instruments of expression, and must be judged as we judge, let us say, the verbal magic of Shelley's verse, as a work of free beauty, fashioned in response to the deepest and truest cravings of man's nature.

That Turner's art moves mainly among the highest interests of man's spiritual nature accounts to some extent for the pre-eminent position he now occupies among modern artists. It is always as an artist conscious of man's high destiny that he claims to be judged, and though he often stumbled and his hand faltered, he never once sank to the level of the passive and prosaic imitator of nature's finitude. This is not the place to inquire minutely into Turner's failings and shortcomings, nor to study their connection with the innumerable masterpieces in which he dared and sometimes attained the very highest of which art is capable. An adequate discussion of the subtle inter-connection of Turner's triumphs and failings would involve the raising of questions of which English criticism seems to prefer to remain in happy ignorance. I cannot therefore attempt to justify my conviction that he is not only the greatest artist our nation has yet produced, but also one of the greatest of modern artists, a man we must rank with Rembrandt and Jean François Millet. But this at least will be generally conceded, that he fully deserves that consideration and sympathy, which the ready instinct of mankind reserves for those who devote themselves without stint and without measure to the highest and most difficult tasks.

A. J. FINBERG.

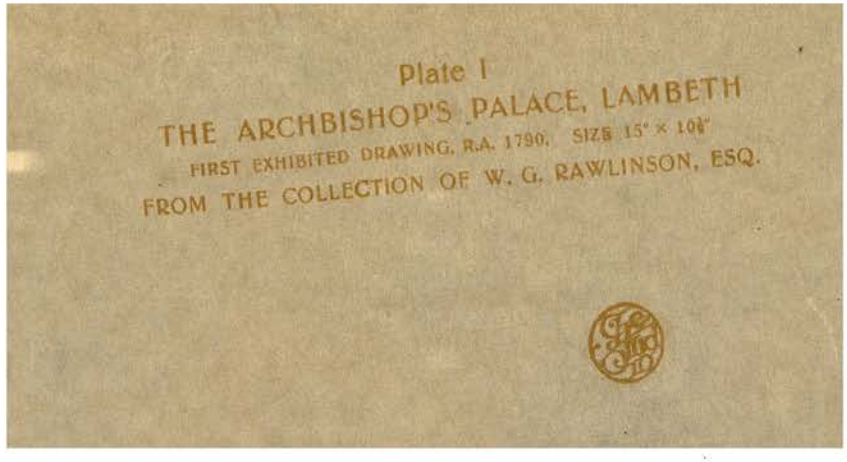


Plate I
THE ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE, LAMBETH
FIRST EXHIBITED DRAWING, R.A. 1790. SIZE 15" × 10⅝"
FROM THE COLLECTION OF W. G. RAWLINSON, ESQ.

Plate II

THE MOUTH OF THE AVON

CIRCA 1792. SIZE 11¼" × 8¾"

FROM THE COLLECTION OF W. G. RAWLINSON, ESQ.

Plate II

THE MOUTH OF THE AVON

CIRCA 1792. SIZE 11¼" × 8¾"

FROM THE COLLECTION OF W. G. RAWLINSON, ESQ.

Plate III

PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL FROM THE NORTH

CIRCA 1794. SIZE 7" × 4¼"

FROM THE COLLECTION OF W. G. RAWLINSON, ESQ

Plate V

DISTANT VIEW OF LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL

CIRCA 1798. SIZE 30½" × 19¾"

FROM THE COLLECTION OF W. G. RAWLINSON, ESQ.

Plate VI

EDINBURGH: FROM ST. MARGARET'S LOCH

CIRCA 1801. SIZE 7⅜" × 5"

IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

Plate VII

STONEHENGE: SUNSET

CIRCA 1804. SIZE $8\frac{3}{4}'' \times 6\frac{1}{4}''$

FROM THE COLLECTION OF W. G. RAWLINSON ESQ.

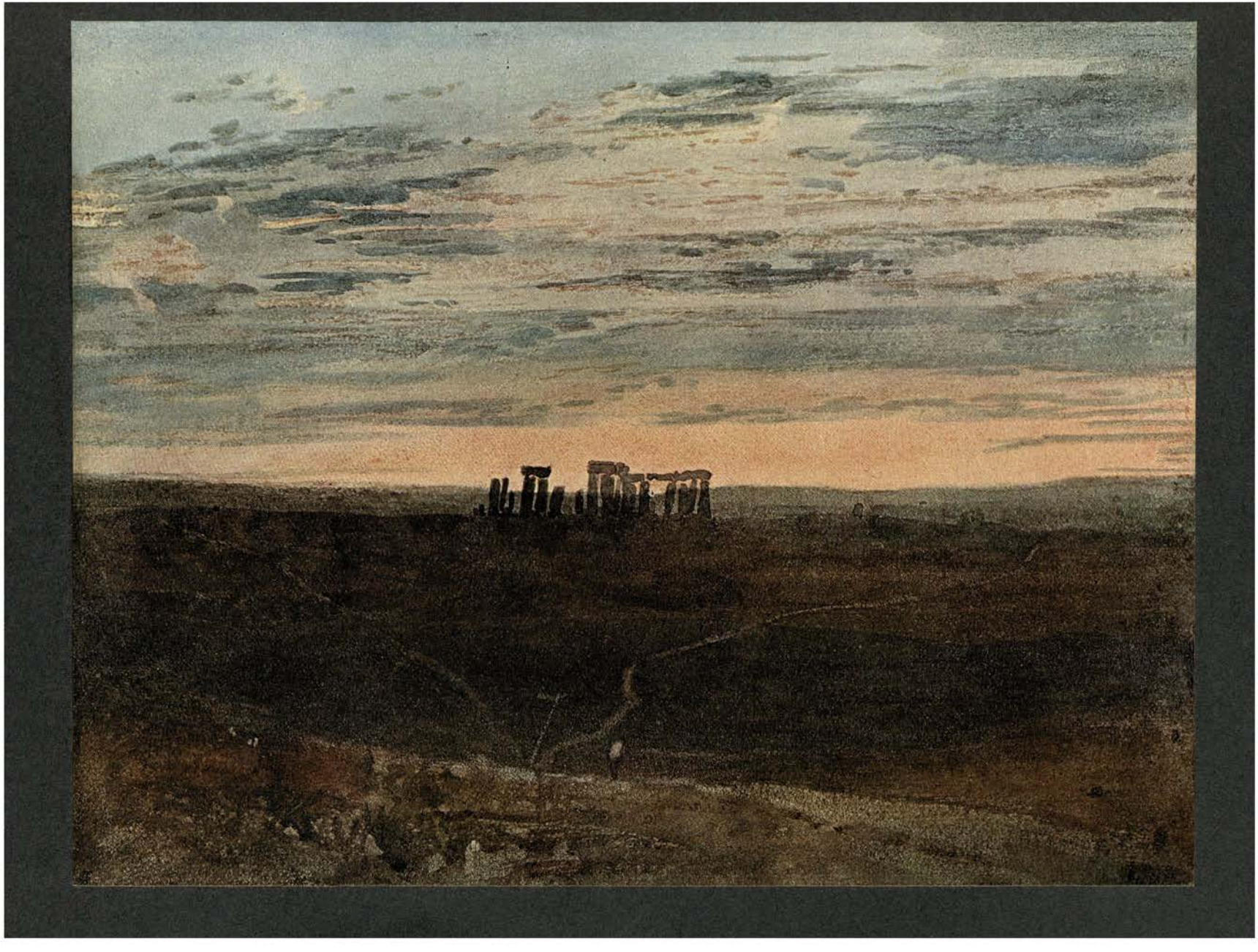


Plate VIII

SCARBOROUGH

CIRCA 1812. SIZE 16" × 11'

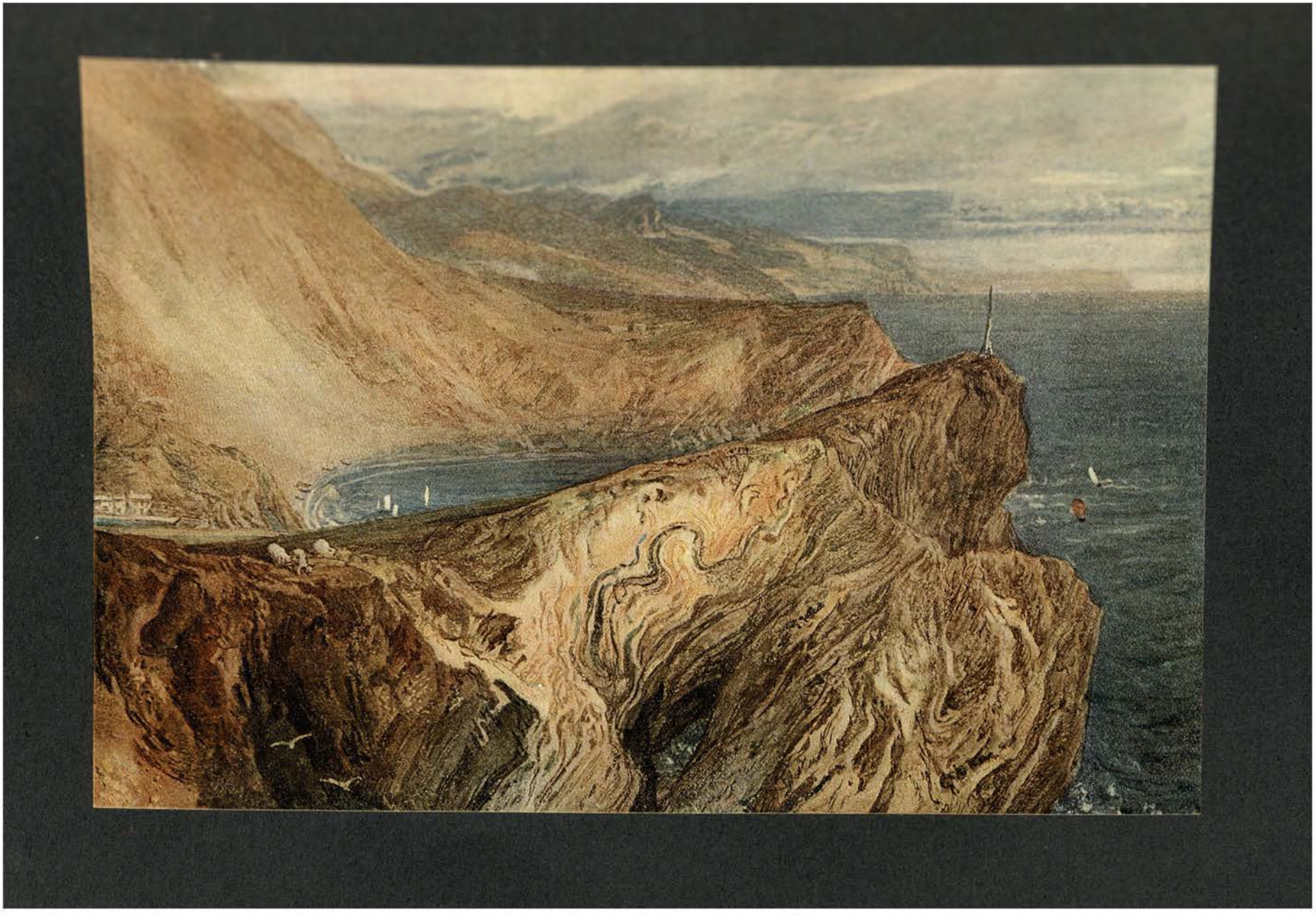
FROM THE COLLECTION OF C. MORLAND AGNEW, ESQ.

Plate IX

LULWORTH COVE

CIRCA 1813. SIZE 8⅛" × 5⅝"

FROM THE COLLECTION OF W. G. RAWLINSON, ESQ.



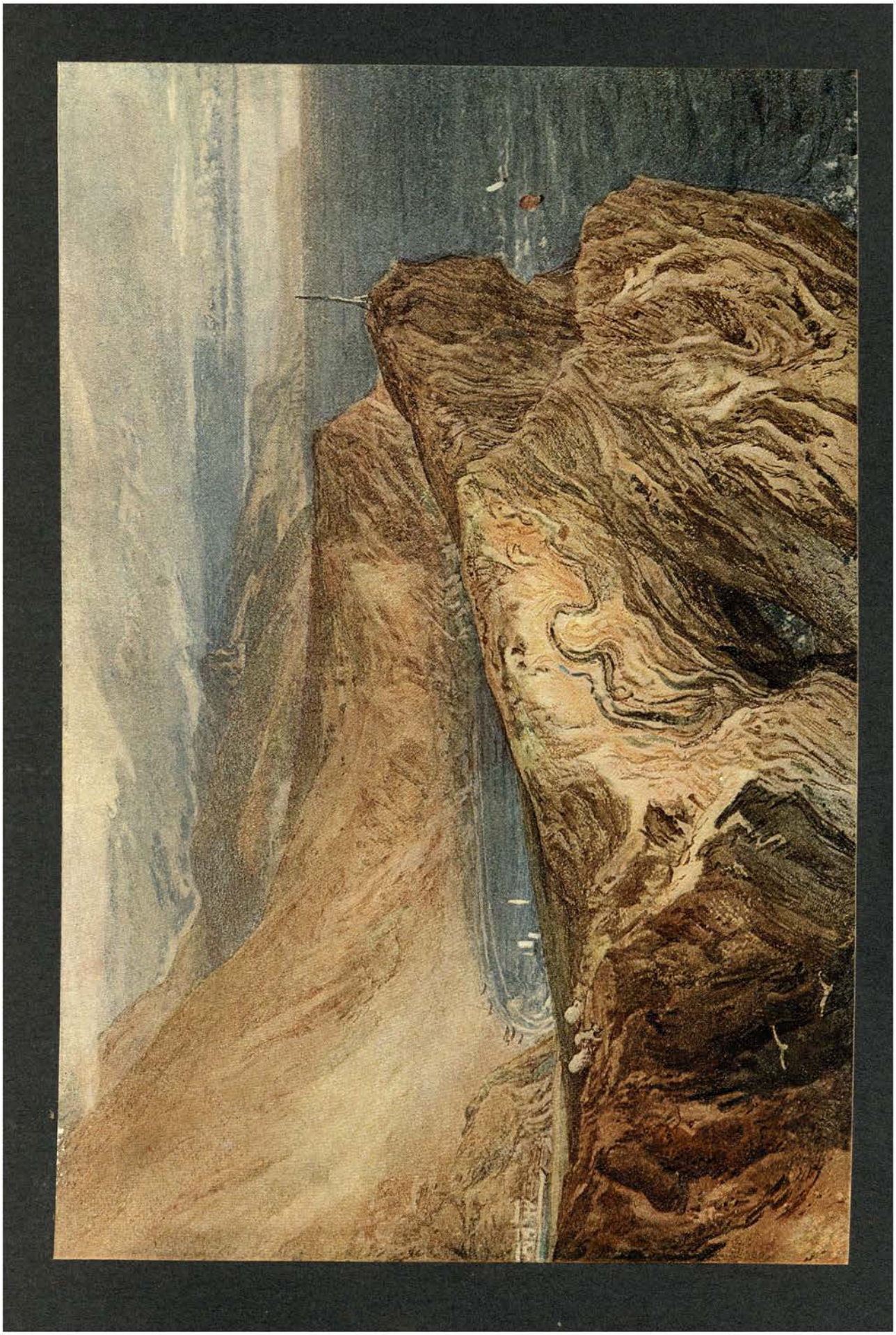


Plate X

GOARHAUSEN AND KATZ CASTLE

CIRCA 1817. SIZE 12' × 7¾"

FROM THE COLLECTION OF W. G. RAWLINSON, ESQ

Plate XI

THE LAKE OF NEMI

CIRCA 1818. SIZE 8¾" × 5¾"

FROM THE COLLECTION OF C. MORLAND AGNEW, ESQ.

Plate XII

TURIN: FROM THE CHURCH OF THE SUPERGA

CIRCA 1818. SIZE 8¾" 5¼"

FROM THE COLLECTION OF C. MORLAND AGNEW, ESQ

Plate XIII

THE CROOK OF THE LUNE

CIRCA 1818. SIZE 16¾" × 11¼"

FROM THE COLLECTION OF REV. WILLIAM MACGREGOR

Plate XIV

NORHAM CASTLE

CIRCA 1822. SIZE $8\frac{1}{2}'' \times 6\frac{1}{8}''$

IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON. No. 175

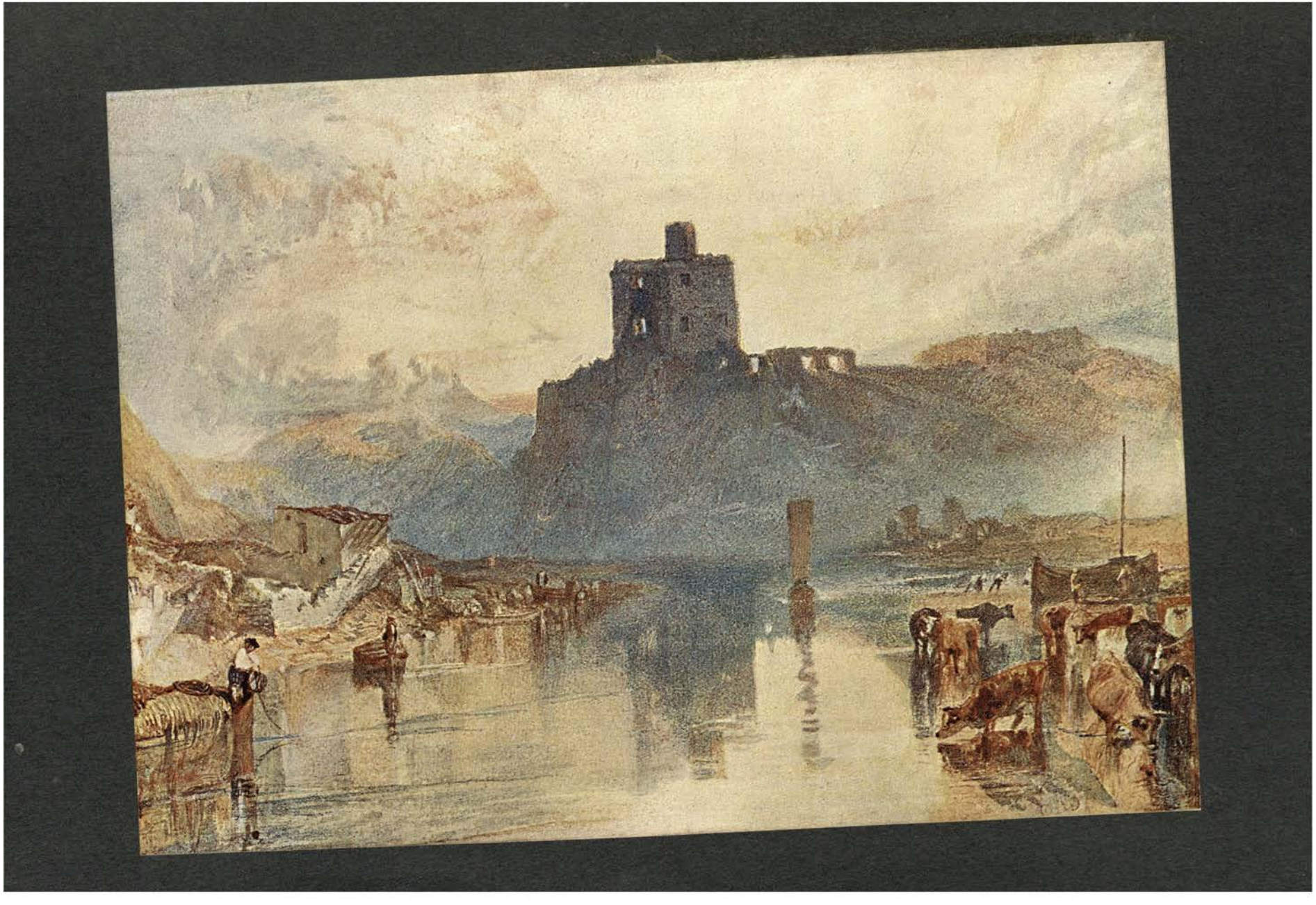


Plate XV

LAUNCESTON

CIRCA 1827. SIZE 15½" × 11"

FROM THE COLLECTION OF J. F. SCHWANN, ESQ.

Plate XVI

BARNARD CASTLE

CIRCA 1627 SIZE 8⅞" : 6½"

FROM THE COLLECTION OF W. G. RAWLINSON, ESQ

Plate XVII

ON THE LAKE AT PETWORTH—EVENING

CIRCA 1830. SIZE 7½" × 5¼"

IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON. No. 425d

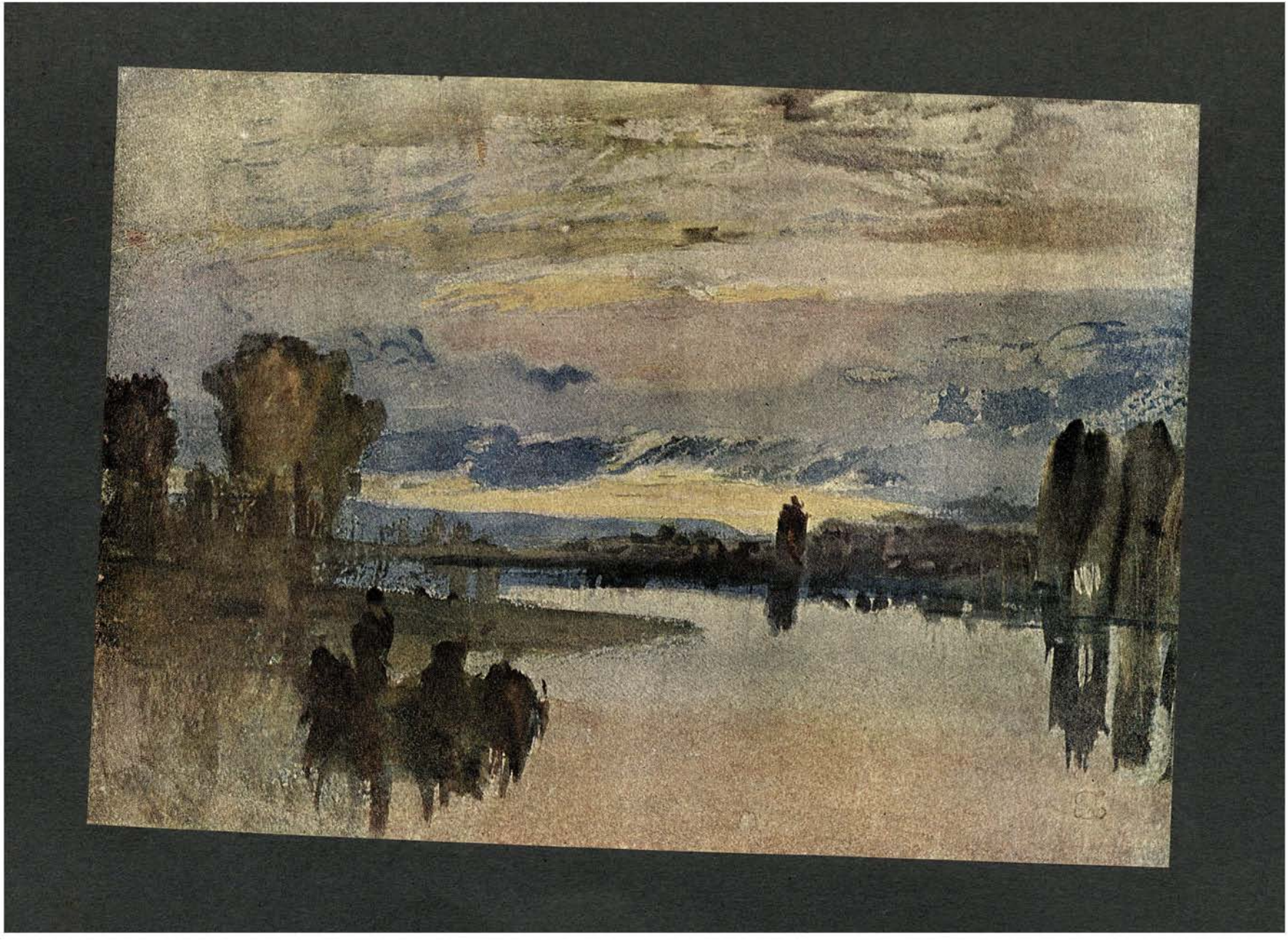


Plate XVIII

COWES

CIRCA 1830. SIZE 16½" × 11¼"

FROM THE COLLECTION OF W. YATES, ESQ

Plate XIX

VENICE: THE SALUTE FROM S. GIORGIO MAGGIORE

CIRCA 1339. SIZE 12" × 9½"

IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON. No. 54

Plate XX

VENICE: CASA GRIMANI AND THE RIALTO

CIRCA 1839. SIZE 11" × 7½"

IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON. No. 354

Plate XXII

A SWISS LAKE

CIRCA 1840-41. SIZE $11\frac{3}{8}$" × 9"

FROM THE COLLECTION OF SIR HICKMAN BACON, BART

Plate XXIII

BELLINZONA: FROM THE SOUTH

CIRCA 1840-41. SIZE $12\frac{7}{8}'' \times 8\frac{7}{8}''$

IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON. No. 764

Plate XXIV

BELLINZONA: FROM THE ROAD TO LOCARNO

CIRCA 1840–41. SIZE 11½" × 9"

IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON. No. 84

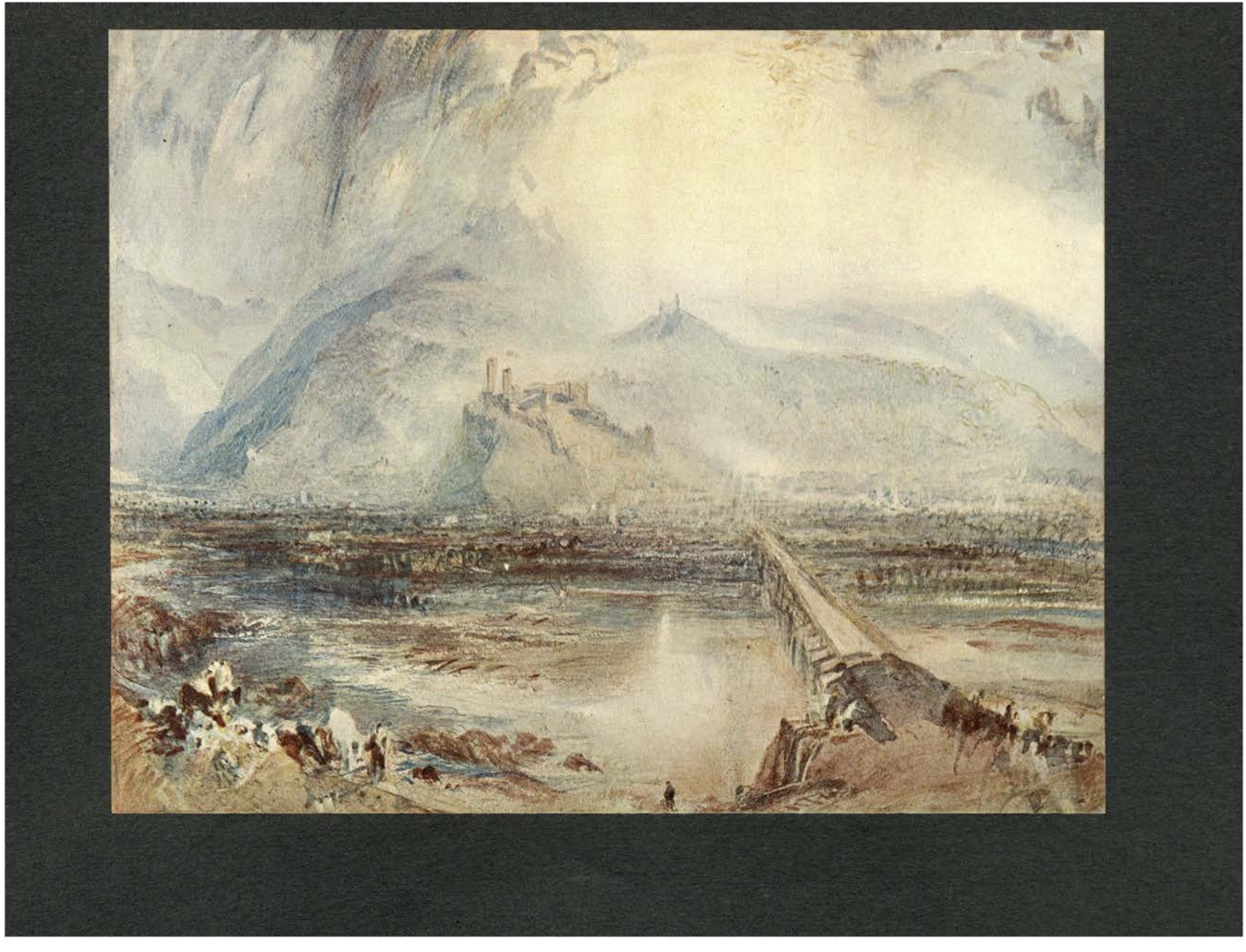


Plate XXV

LAUSANNE: FROM LE SIGNAL

CIRCA 1842-43. SIZE 13' × 9"

FROM THE COLLECTION OF W. G. RAWLINSON, ESQ.

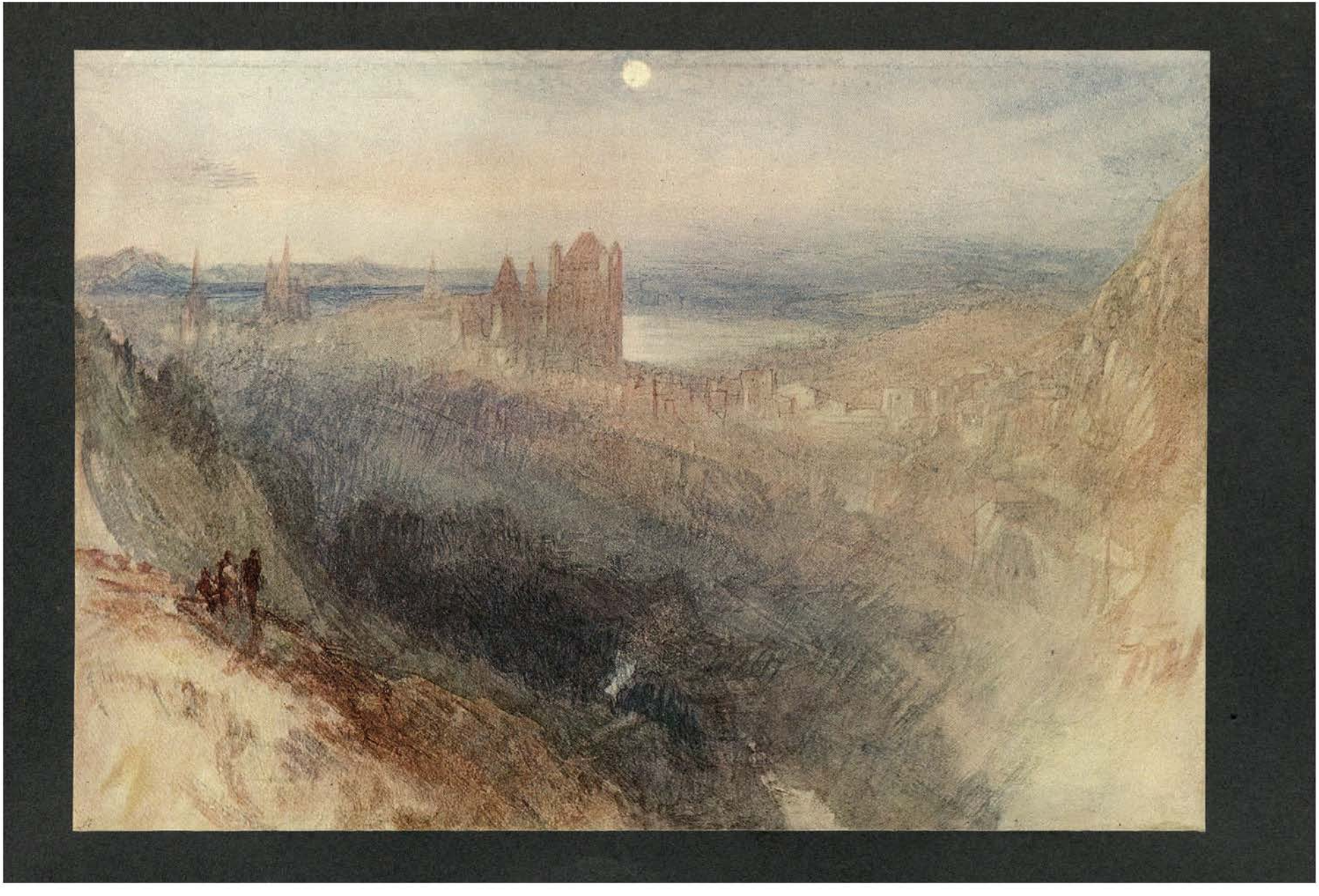


Plate XXVI

LAUSANNE

CIRCA 1842-43. SIZE 14½" × 9$\frac{13}{16}$"

IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON. No. 824

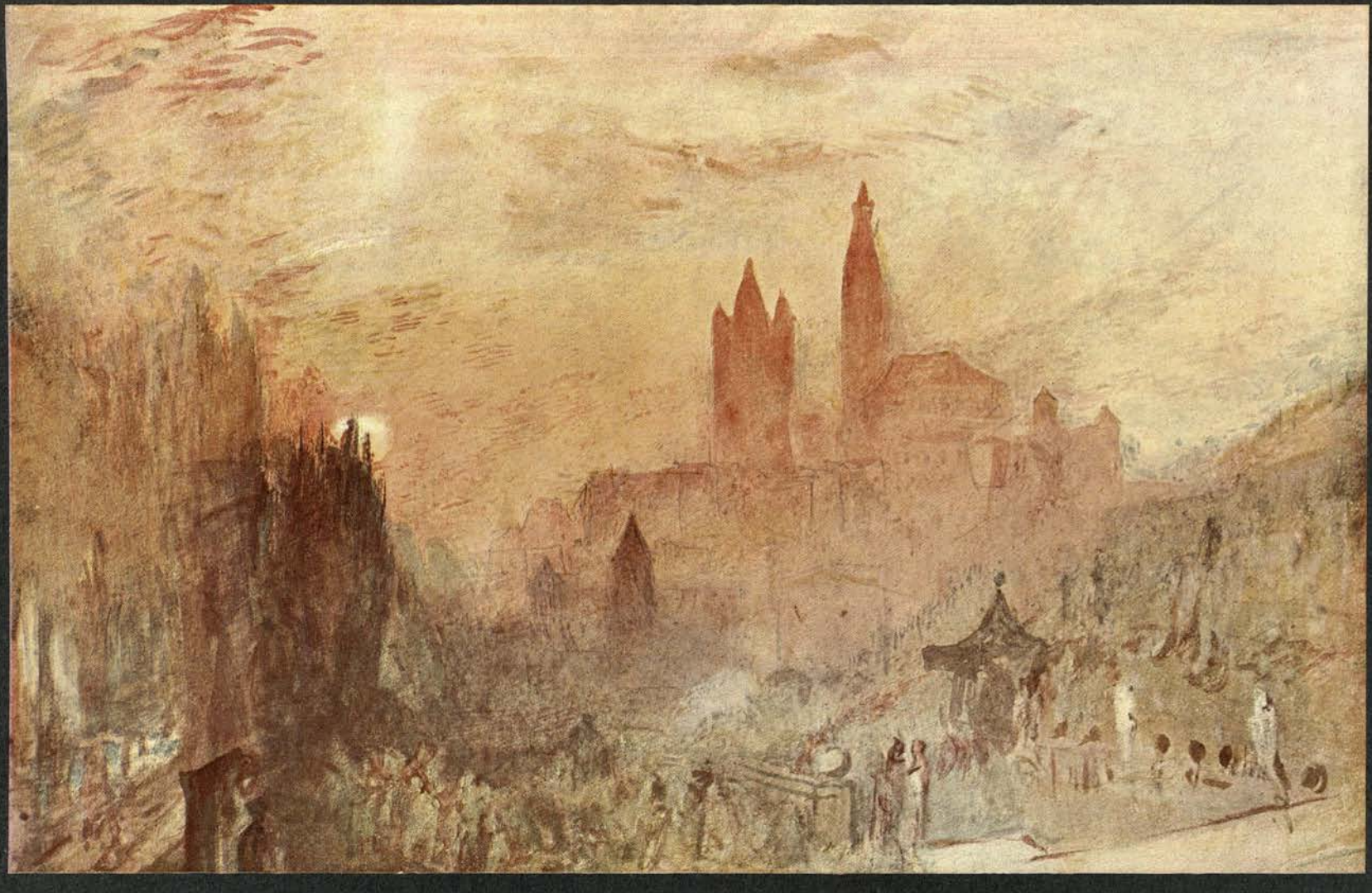


Plate XXVII

ZURICH

CIRCA 1840–44. SIZE $12\frac{1}{2}'' \times 9\frac{3}{16}''$

IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON. No. 287

Plate XXIX

SCHAFFHAUSEN: THE TOWN

CIRCA 1843-45. SIZE 18½″ × 13½″

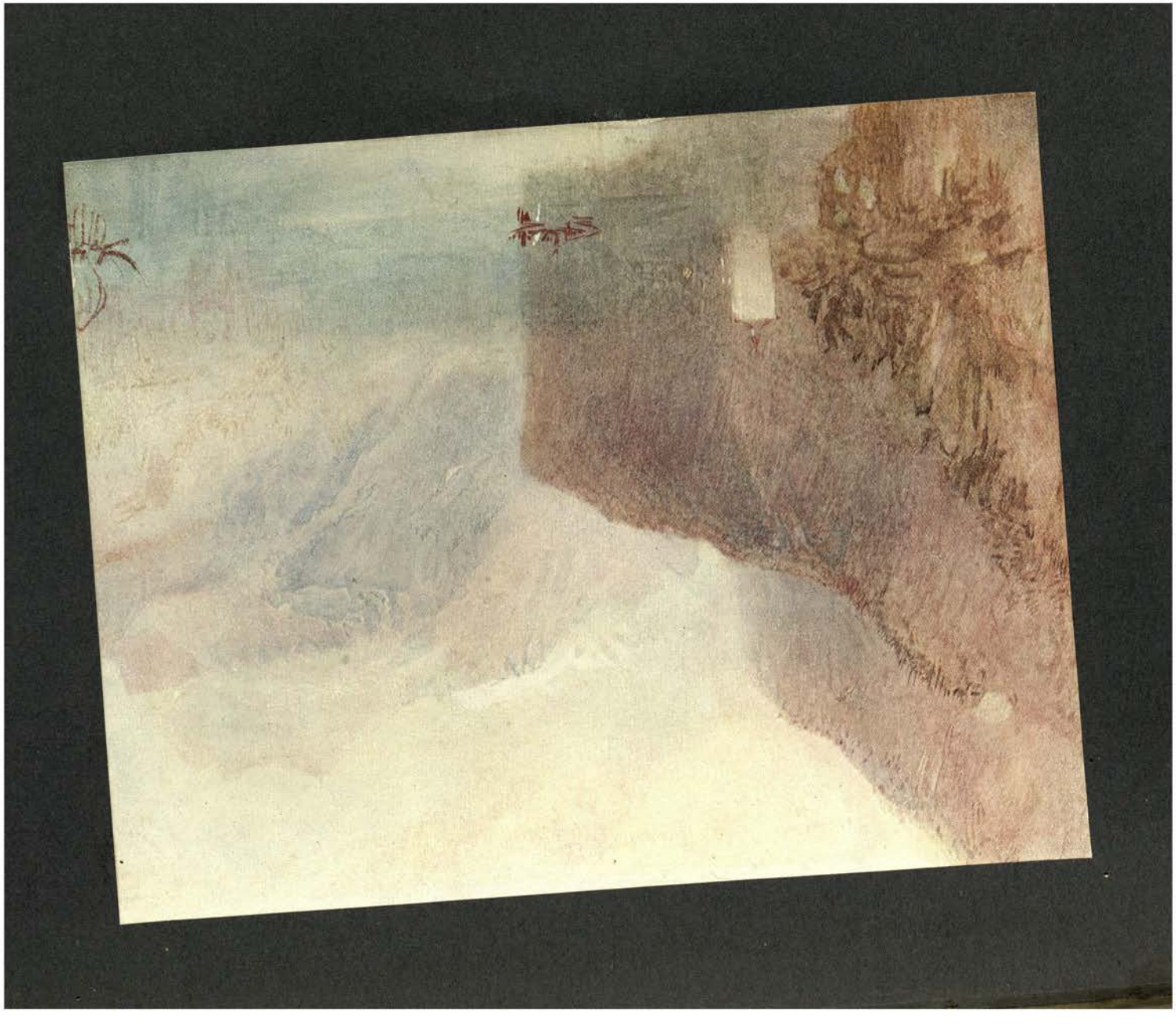
FROM THE COLLECTION OF R. BROCKLEBANK, ESQ.

Plate XXX

TELL'S CHAPEL, FLUELEN

CIRCA 1845. SIZE $11\frac{3}{8}$" × 9"

FROM THE COLLECTION OF W. G. RAWLINSON, ESQ



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